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The American Conservative

THE WEAKNESS OF EMPIRE

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ISOLATIONISM OR NON-INTERVENTIONISM?

I wrote *Sands of Empire: Missionary Zeal, American Foreign Policy and the Hazards of Global Ambition* with a hope of generating debate. In that spirit, I welcome Charles V. Peña's thoughtful though at times critical review (April 24). Also in that spirit, I offer a couple clarifications.

Peña correctly says I place much stock in the two fundamental Western views of history—the Idea of Progress and the so-called Cyclical View—as a construct for understanding today's foreign-policy debate. But he errs in suggesting the result is a “binary view” of “black or white, good or bad, us or them.”

The primary insight of this construct is that the debate really should be over the role of culture in driving world events. Progress devotees generally dismiss culture's role; Cyclical people generally emphasize it. With the Cyclical people I believe we live in a world characterized by cultural and civilizational impulses and animosities. That does not mean, as Peña suggests, that I advocate a civilizational war with the Islamic world. Indeed, as he notes without due regard for its significance, I believe this reality argues for measured, non-belligerent foreign-policy approaches—approaches I suspect he also favors.

Where we really depart is in the fact that, unlike him, I am not an isolationist. I believe America must play a world role to protect its own vital interests and those of the West and to foster stability in key strategic regions. But we should avoid, if possible, being incendiary to peoples of other civilizations. The question for Peña is what America should do if today's civilizational realities generated an Islamic fundamentalist takeover

of Saudi Arabia, with its Western oil jugular. My book was designed to demonstrate the danger of such developments and how they might be avoided. Peña, who seems to ignore the danger, may still cling to his isolationism even in the face of such an ominous turn of events, but the American people wouldn't.

ROBERT W. MERRY
McLean, Virginia

Charles Peña responds:

Robert Merry believes I am an isolationist because I don't share his views about what constitutes a vital national-security interest. Like so many others, he believes the popular myth that oil is critical to U.S. national security. To be sure, the United States depends on imported oil for more than half of the oil it uses. But nearly half of the oil imported into the United States comes from North and South America, and only about 24 percent of U.S.-imported oil comes from the Persian Gulf. Even more important than the percentage of oil imported by the United States is the fact that oil is a commodity traded openly on the worldwide market. With no other meaningful sources of revenue, the oil-rich Gulf countries must sell their oil, and once the oil is sold on the world market, they cannot control where it ends up.

Ultimately, the realities of the economics of oil do not justify the American obsession with Middle East oil and the need for special relationships with regimes like Saudi Arabia to secure access to the oil. Merry would do well to remember that it was our unnecessary military presence in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War that was the primary criticism of Osama bin Laden against the United States and the reason for his call for *jihad*.

THE SLEEP OF REASON

I think that we on the true American Right give the Bush administration too much credit when we attack the administration's foreign policy as if it were a rational thing that has simply failed to grasp certain significant factors.

The fact is, one gradually comes to appreciate that their policy is not in any sense rationally derived—not in the sense that educated adults apply reason. The president has surrounded himself with pseudo-intellectual experts who cater to a delusional enthusiasm for ideas that spring from some neocon wish list. When challenged, that circle of experts simply reaches down into a bag of “stay the course” slogans, while impugning the character, integrity, and patriotism of the rest of us.

The administration's truculence with respect to Iran makes it very difficult to conceive of any constructive solution. It renders diplomatic progress next to impossible, as all of the players are put in a position where self-respect makes it extremely difficult to make any concessions. Either the administration is determined to wreak havoc with incredibly long-term and adverse implications, or it does not have a clue how human beings interact. Bush may have become a greater danger to peace and stability in the Eastern Hemisphere than Iran could possibly become in the next century.

WILLIAM FLAX
via e-mail

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[IMMIGRATION]

WORKERS PARTY

"The first thing we want is tough border control. We can do a much better job on our borders than George Bush has done." That wasn't Tom Tancredo. It was Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean as he announced that border security would be his party's top priority in the midterm elections.

It's a mark of how lax the Bush administration has been at the border that Dean—who just last year smeared immigration reformers as bigots and accused Republicans of trying to "scapegoat immigrants"—sees room to the White House's right on immigration control. But the DNC head offered another surprise: "I think the president's guest-worker program is essentially indentured servitude," the *Washington Times* quotes Dean as saying. "It doesn't help the immigrant, and it threatens wages."

Several economically literate center-left commentators—George Borjas, Robert J. Samuelson, Nicholas Kristof, and Paul Krugman—have recently made similar points about the effect of open immigration on working-class wages. In his *New York Times* column, Krugman reiterated several points immigration reformers have been making for years: "the net benefits to the U.S. economy from immigration ... are small," "many of the worst-off native-born Americans are hurt by immigration," and competition from cheap foreign labor increases the number of jobs Americans can't afford to do. He even acknowledged the tension between mass immigration and the welfare state.

Dean's endorsement of "earned legalization" raises the suspicion that his real reason for opposing guest-worker programs is not wage pressure but his preference for an amnesty that will allow today's illegals to become tomorrow's Democratic voters. But maybe the



advance of immigration realism among liberal intellectuals will rub off on liberal politicians.

[DIPLOMACY]

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

The loyalty cult that so successfully insulates President Bush from critical counsel has cast its spell over the Foreign Service. Since 1969, the union that represents diplomats has given annual awards for "constructive dissent," but this year its 10,000 members have submitted just eight nominations—none, the *Washington Times* reports, "related to a controversial foreign policy issue such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." The deadline has been extended for two weeks, but that's unlikely to solve the problem, for as the *Times* piece notes, "Several Foreign Service officers said the lack of enthusiasm for speaking out is a result of a 'climate of intimidation and self-censorship' at the State Department under the Bush administration."

Three honorable Foreign Service officers weren't so constrained. On the eve of the Iraq invasion, John Brady Kiesling, a civil servant under four presidents, wrote in his resignation letter, "The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense." Days later, John Brown, another diplomatic veteran of

more than two decades, tendered his resignation, saying he could not "in good conscience support President Bush's war plans against Iraq." A week later, Mary Wright, who helped open the U.S. embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan in the course of her 15-year Foreign Service career, took her bow, writing, "the Administration's policies are making the world a more dangerous, not a safer, place. ... I cannot defend or implement them."

It would appear that those most worthy of this award were driven from the service, but it's unlikely that their kind of courage would be impressed with a certificate anyway. Ambassadorships would be far more appropriate.

[STRATEGY]

ADULT SUPERVISION

It's been some time since a foreign policy initiative coming from the Bush administration was cause for hope. But the announcement that George H.W. Bush's Secretary of State James Baker will—along with former Congressman Lee Hamilton—chair a bipartisan panel designed to generate fresh ideas about America's Mideast policies may be promising. The group will visit Baghdad and undertake a broader fact-finding mission to the Middle East.

Baker, it will be remembered, opposed the American occupation of Iraq after the first Gulf War and has long been a proponent of a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. He can of course expect vicious opposition to his mission from the neoconserva-

tives, who consider these stands villainous.

The administration still gives every indication of being a tightly controlled bubble led by a president full of self-confident bluster and void of intellectual curiosity. But things can always change, and this panel, if it is able to generate ideas for a change of course and have them implemented, may well push America's failed foreign policy in a more sensible direction.

[CULTURE]

NEW ONE-DROP RULE

Last week the *New York Times* reported on those making use of the advances in the mapping of the human genome and new availability of genetic testing to determine their ethnic forebears. The father of two adopted white but slightly tan-complexioned children found his kids were 20 percent North African and American Indian—and was he ever going to milk that when the kids applied to college and for financial aid. A life-long gentile discovered he had Jewish ancestry and applied for Israeli citizenship. A New York black woman claimed her ancestors were titled Scots who owned castles—and wants one of the ancestral seats for herself.

Curiosity about roots is a natural human trait, and the use of DNA to prove something about one's ancestry is going to be a good business. Most interesting is the way the testing will undermine the sacred cows of liberal multiculturalism. The *Times* report makes clear that a great market for the tests is those seeking ethnically based advantage: access to Indian tribal gambling profits, the affirmative-action track in college admissions.

More focused attention to ethnicity is likely to demonstrate the absurdity of the current affirmative-action regime and thus undermine it. The "one-drop rule" once employed as a segregation

barrier is now the linchpin of the liberal racial spoils system: one drop of black ancestry will get you in. But will it survive the challenge of admitting millions with some non-white ancestry who want to get in on the game? Or will it collapse like a house of cards, leaving Americans no choice but an effort at legal color-blindness?

[NEOCONS]

PIPES DREAMS

In a column last month, neocon theorist Daniel Pipes lamented that none of the leading parties running in Israel's elections advocated "winning the war" against the Palestinians. Pipes ran through the roster of Israeli positions, including the ethnic-cleansing option pushed by some of Israel's right-wing pols; none of them, he wrote, were decisive enough. Israelis, he complained, advocated compromise, unilateral boundary drawing, enriching their (Palestinian) enemies, but somehow balk at the decisive military action against the people who still happen to live on the land that some Israelis want for themselves.

This isn't new—there have always been Americans and Israelis, from Meir Kahane onward, who have advocated a decisive military solution to crush the Palestinians once and for all. "Transfer"—the Israeli euphemism for ethnic cleansing—is not really enough; some kind of genocide (though for some reason Pipes shrinks from spelling it out) is called for.

What makes the column remarkable is that three years ago Pipes was nominated by George W. Bush to serve on the U.S. Institute for Peace, and when (rather understandably, considering his views) opposition to the confirmation arose in the Senate, Bush engineered a recess appointment. Examples of the White House's questionable moral judgment abound, but the Pipes episode should not be forgotten. ■

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Can We Win An Insurgents' War?

The U.S. Army is not going to be defeated in Iraq, said one U.S. general, and he added pointedly: If we lose this war, we will lose it here in the United States. Correct.

The only war America ever “lost” was lost in the United States.

When Nixon pulled U.S. forces out of Vietnam in early 1973, the Viet Cong had been crushed, the North Vietnamese defeated, every provincial capital was in Saigon’s hands.

Yet we lost Vietnam in 1975, when Hanoi, rearmed by Moscow, invaded with a dozen divisions, while Saigon, cut off by Congress, was forced to fight what General Giap called “a poor man’s war.”

Books have been written about why we did what we did in 1974 and 1975. The truth is the United States walked away from South Vietnam when our enemy was flat on his back. As Nixon was bedeviled by Watergate, a Democratic Congress to whom power had passed decided South Vietnam was no longer worth saving.

In Iraq, we have fought three years and the cost in war dead is not 5 percent of the 58,000 we lost in Vietnam. Yet America’s will to see this war through seems less than it was in Vietnam in November 1968.

When Nixon told the nation North Vietnam could not defeat the United States—“only Americans can do that”—and he called on the “Great Silent Majority” to stand with him for “peace with honor,” the country did—through three more years of war and 30,000 more dead.

But the America of 2006 would never accept three more years of 10,000 more

dead every year for success in Iraq. Long before, the nation would force the administration to pull out. And this raises a relevant question. Are we the people and nation we used to be?

For if one compares the sacrifices of previous wars with the present cost in blood and treasure of Iraq, the disparities are startling.

The war against Mussolini’s Italy, Hitler’s Germany, and Hirohito’s Japan cost 400,000 U.S. dead in four years. At its height, a third of the GDP was allocated for the war. At its end, 12 million Americans were under arms.

In Korea, we lost 33,000 in three years. During the Eisenhower era, we spent 9 percent of GDP on defense and maintained a draft. Reagan kept defense spending at 6 percent of GDP and broke the Soviet Empire.

Today, we spend 4 percent on defense, 1 percent on Iraq, our casualties are a tiny fraction of what we took in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. Yet America wants out and the enemy knows it. What does this tell us?

We are a changed people and nation from who and what we were in 1960. And we live in a changed world.

In the 1960s Americans believed our fate hung on the outcome of the Cold War with Communism, that the Free World was at stake. That belief and that unity were shattered by Vietnam. By the 1970s, part of America, as Carter said, had gotten over our “inordinate fear of Communism.”

Reagan rallied us for one more push, and it was enough. We won the Cold War when our Soviet adversary collapsed of a heart attack in the middle of the ring while we stared, stupefied.

But the enemies of the West in the Third World learned lessons from that era, too, from Algeria, Vietnam, and Afghanistan: If you keep fighting and bleeding them, the old imperial nations of the West will tire and go home. Bin Laden has always believed this.

Seeing the Taliban army collapse and disintegrate in the face of U.S. firepower, George W. Bush was persuaded the Iraqi army would do the same. Cakewalk. And the Iraqi army accommodated us and vanished. The enemy preferred to prepare for the kind of war they have often won, an insurgents’ war in which they bleed and outlast us.

Like the general said, if we lose this war, we will lose it in the United States. Why? Because the issue now—who rules Iraq?—is of greater importance to Sunnis, Shi’ites, and Kurds than to us. Because we do not see Iraq as involving the survival of our country. Because we are unwilling to spend blood for a “democracy” that seems to mean the larger wing of Islam in Iraq gets to rule roughly for a while over the smaller wing that used to do the same to them.

As Sun Tsu wrote, know thy enemy, know thyself, in a thousand battles, a thousand victories. Going into Iraq, our leaders did not know our enemy. They do not really seem to have known America.

Americans are holding on in Iraq today, not because we anticipate the glorious fruits of victory but because we do not want to witness another defeat for the United States. ■

[the sun always sets]

The Weakness of Empire

History has not dealt kindly with imperial ambitions, and America, however benevolent her intent, cannot hope to be an exception.

By Michael Vlahos

SOMETHING REMARKABLE happened on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Commentators began to declare, in somewhat exultant tones, that America had at last become a true empire. America was of course also a benevolent empire, they insisted, but that nod to altruistic tradition could not hide their excitement that America had at last joined the greatest empires of the past.

Implicit in these giddy declarations was the assumption that empire was an exalted state of power and possibility, not so unlike Rome at its zenith. Ironically, and for a historical instant, they were right. But there is one inescapable aspect of empire that the commentators missed. Empires are weak. It is republics in contrast that are strong. The United States is a republic that has been operating like an empire, and it has suffered for it. If we look at the gold standard for empire—Rome—we can see why.

First of all, what is an empire? Empire has less to do with scale of realm or of power than it does with one single feature. Simply, it is a polity where politics itself revolves around the person of the emperor.

This differs from the politics of kingship. Kings represent and embody a densely woven social fabric. They preside over a society of aristocracy: an extended family of rule, where the king

is also father. Empires in contrast often emerge from republics. Thus Rome has been a favorite model for American commentators precisely because its successful passage from republic to empire seems close to ours.

Such post-republican emperors often inhabit the complex politics of multiple competing constituencies. These groups and factions continue to do political business within a republic's constitutional framework transformed. Thus emperors find themselves consulting with and cajoling senates or assemblies; and unlike kings, they may owe their very legitimacy to these bodies.

Weakness 1: The Imperial Person

But the making and the doing in politics swirl around the imperial person—indeed, politics is dependent on the imperial person. This is the first weakness of empire: because politics revolves around the emperor, the rise and fall, success and failure of state policy is ultimately his alone.

The imperial situation is thus one of continuing and always worrisome vulnerability because no matter how many supporters or factions an emperor marshals, they can vanish in an instant. No matter that they have been handsomely bought off with perquisites and gifts, no matter that they are kept in line with

threats and periodic cruel example. Failure of an imperial venture puts imperial authority itself instantly at risk.

Thus emperors do their utmost to ensure that politics is stuffed with reliable personal retainers. Longstanding official empires are a bit easier on the imperial person: there may be a tradition of a submissive bureaucracy and a compliant senate, and so the emperor's legitimacy is less at the mercy of policy failure. But crisis immediately opens up the prospect of rival claimants and coups, usurpations, and civil wars.

A republic's robustness, in contrast, derives from its ability to replace an elected leader and his government with relative ease. This is consecrated in the U.S. Constitution by mandated quadrennial elections of its executive.

Our constitutional framework is still in place, but after 9/11 it shifted operating practice to the imperial. Basically, 9/11 created an imperial dispensation. Through it the president took on the mantle of the office of commander in chief, which under the circumstances was perfectly natural. But then he went further and announced a state of perpetual war—"a war of generations," "a hundred years war"—and so transformed himself into an imperial person. The transformation here was from episodic commander in chief—when and where

circumstances warranted—to permanent generalissimo. His primary identity was now that of the military commanding person.

U.S. tradition and precedent limited the office of commander in chief both to the duration of a specific emergency and in terms of presidential powers. The Cold War chipped away at congressional authority to limit presidential powers. But the breathtaking 9/11 attacks drove the president to expand these powers further and make them truly open-ended.

Here the imperial transformation was not simply about power. Even more persuasively, it operated in the realm of authority and expectation. The popular climate was such after 9/11 that Americans seemed to share the prospect that American energies now revolved again around a great world struggle. Here of necessity—or so everyone thought—the entire conduct and control of this struggle should be vested in the emperor. The president took full advantage of the new *zeitgeist* to lock politics into an imperial orbit. Moreover, Americans also believed that war was the new national norm and that it would last a very, very long time. Few questioned that the situation marked a historic shift in the inmost nature of American politics.

So the president, through the transformed office of commander in chief, became an emperor. But the war that made this possible was now an imperial war and so his exclusive enterprise. He deliberately denied national participation—“go about your business”—that would have put this war squarely in the tradition of the old republic. Now it was his, and the benefits were great, extending deeply into American society as much as they did across the globe.

But the president also took on this weakness of empire: the enterprise stands and falls with him.

Weakness 2: The Imperial Purse

In crisis, a republic can claim all the energy and resources of its citizens because in the end the citizenry and the republic are the same. In empires, however, former republican citizens have given over their political authority to the trust and keeping of empire—and also their deepest responsibility to the nation as well. The emperor now manages; the emperor now defends. This is the heart of the imperial compact, and it is expressive of a fundamental political transaction: the citizens yield over management powers to the imperial person in exchange for a release from civic responsibility.

In revenue terms, this means that although they will still pay a citizen's normal taxes, they are no longer obligated for extraordinary levees. Formal empires, in fact, are unusually weak when it comes to squeezing the very top citizens, those who in a republic would have been the foremost contributors. Remember, an empire that succeeds a republic retains as a sort of sacred fiction the old constitutional framing. And behind this fiction is continuing reality: that the emperor is not all-powerful, but rather dependent on the same political constituencies that were players in the old republic. The emperor cannot do without them, and he cannot afford to alienate them. Thus the top citizens in effect have to be bought off. This president has done just that with his extravagant tax cuts. In other words, the emperor can have his war, which itself is necessary to his majestic exercise of imperial power, as long as he does not demand too much from the interest groups whose support he needs for the continued exercise of imperial authority.

It is up to the emperor to marshal what national resources he can—and this is especially true in elective wars he has taken on and made his own. He cannot ask citizens to bear a burden that is exclusively his, and this limitation

extends to money. As historian Mark C. Bartusis wrote, “In Byzantium there was never a general ‘citizen’s duty’ to fight for the state. In fact the very notion that a subject had an obligation to defend the state was foreign to the Byzantine mind set and antithetical to both Roman and Byzantine ideology that identified the emperor, through his army, as the Defender of the Empire.”

War expenditures therefore must exist in a “normal” fiscal context—which naturally limits the scope of imperial actions. Thus truly grand war by contrast and by definition is always a republican, or people’s war.

This limitation is even more keenly felt when it comes to soldiers. Here it is not simply a question of how they are paid, but also how they are recruited and retained. One of the key transformations of republic to empire is precisely in the shift from armed citizenry to imperial military. By fighting his own war, the emperor above all needs loyal troops: both figurative troops in politics and real shooters in the battle. The transformation from armed citizenry to imperial military is not simply a shift from conscription to volunteer force. In fact, it is necessary for the new army to become the emperor’s instrument, and thus it must be at some deep level bonded to the imperial person. In this way, the empire’s soldiers are also transformed. But it is often metamorphosis so nuanced as to be easily missed that they become the emperor’s retainers.

If they are native volunteers, then their emotional motivation to join is still patriotic—for the nation. But increasingly, their functional motivation as soldiers changes and is expressed through their direct allegiance to the emperor, in whose wars they fight. He is their benefactor, their protector, and their leader. Integral to imperial authority and imperial majesty is also the emperor’s overarching identity as soldier (hence in the

original Latin, *imperator* meant general). Therefore, the emperor's relationship to his soldiers must first be one of a general to his troops. He may not actually lead forces in the field, but his persona is anointed as generalissimo and war leader. For this president these ties were underscored in media interviews with troops on the eve of war: "We're good to go when our commander-in-chief gives the word."

This relationship has also been etched repeatedly in very public and very emotional images of the emperor with his army. The president would often give war speeches at posts and bases where his person was always staged with troops arrayed in back of him, as well as before him. There he would stand in camera-eye in a sea of battledress uniforms. The emotion would run high, encouraging him, lending steely drama to his voice. There are even images of soldiers in the round, outstretching their arms to him. At applause lines his troops would go further, washing his presence with whoops and hoo-yahs. The ties of the imperial person and his army were further consecrated by his ubiquitous short military jacket, emblazoned with its badge and title of supreme authority: "George W. Bush, Commander-in-Chief."

Weakness 3: The Imperial Majesty

We have indicated that the personal politics of empire are surprisingly fragile, and that the politics of the emperor must therefore always be about reinforcing or shoring up his politics by the constant reminding exercise of imperial authority. This is best done not through attempting to acquire more statutory power—a risky and problematical pursuit—but rather through radiating more authority.

This is after all why people put up with emperors at all. People have come to believe that leadership of the polity

and the nation requires a single, celestial man at the helm.

Imperial vesting happens because the emperor in his imperial person is the bringer of triumph, the vanquisher of foes in a world milieu of constant, "lurking" insecurity—a favorite term in presidential rhetoric because it helps to sustain the impression that enemies are everywhere, all the time, requiring constant, strenuous, and victorious executive action. In Rome this quality of the imperial person was famously styled as *victor ac triumphator*.

The emperor himself was anointed ultimately through the legitimizing concept of "eternal victory." Rome's very identity came to be couched in terms of perpetual triumph—over foes, adversity, backwardness, over what was not Roman. Moreover, the nation's (*res publica*) triumph was achieved always through the intercession of imperial leadership. The emperor had to be the quintessential generalissimo, and victory thus became the essential hallmark of his reign.

The emperor's authority was established through what became the central Roman imperial ritual: the imperial triumph. In the triumph, the emperor's semi-magical persona that marshaled the forces of the nation and led them to victory was celebrated and revealed.

Central to a Roman imperial triumph was the conveyance of the imperial person to the sacred place where triumph would be celebrated—a stage entrance always freighted with grand symbolism. Our emperor's landing on the flight deck of the *USS Lincoln* was no exception. Instead of a triumphal chariot, the president arrived on a military aircraft in which he was co-pilot, thus demonstrating to all his soldierly *bona fides*.

The *Lincoln* itself represented a grand symbol of American power and an enormous icon of eternal victory. In this triumph it is significant that the emperor

chose to celebrate exclusively with his troops, where Americans were collectively placed outside as second-class onlookers—thus underscoring their depreciation of citizenship while elevating the military's relationship.

In Roman times, of course, the army was often the source of imperial legitimacy. Just as the army would proclaim a new emperor by elevating him on a shield borne up by troops, so this emperor was raised up by "his own" (*ton idion*). In a supremely public moment, the emperor chose to have his own legitimacy ratified before the American people by the very military that represented "his own."

The procession and prostration of the enemy leader is a common trope in Roman victory ceremonies. The vanquished leader undergoes ritual divestiture of his badges of authority and then is forced to prostrate himself before the imperial person. This ceremony was often associated with the army and took place in the camps. But Justinian transferred this ceremony to the imperial capital in 534. The public triumph over the Vandalic kingdom culminated in the divestiture and *proskynesis* of Gelimer, which served to signal to the Gothic kingdoms that their regimes too were illegitimate, that they were no better than usurpers, and that they were next.

When U.S. forces pulled Saddam out of his "spider hole" they made sure to videotape the filthy and disheveled dictator during a medical examination. This was no medical moment but rather a carefully orchestrated ceremony of divestiture and prostration. Like similar late Roman ceremonies, it took place in one of the battle army's encampments, but it was also broadcast worldwide, to have the widest public impact, like an ancient victory procession in the imperial capital. Indeed, modern ceremony puts its ancient antecedents to shame. Not only was the entire world shown

again and again the interior of Saddam's mouth, but also the purposeful degradation of the former ruler went beyond even the old Roman act of forced *proskynesis*.

The emperor-president also addressed the people in carefully assembled, hand-picked venues. These not only guarantee high levels of emotional support—visualized on-camera as positive energy—but they also bring forth comments that are less questions than they are petitions of support. In the president's March 22 "town hall" meeting in Wheeling, West Virginia, one military wife exclaimed, "I ask you this from the bottom of my heart, for a solution to this, because it seems that our major media networks don't want to portray the good. ... And if people could see that, if the American people could see [the good], there would never be another negative word about this conflict."

FOR A TIME **NATIONAL POLITICS** CAME TO **REVOLVE DANGEROUSLY LIKE OLD EMPIRES,**
AND ALMOST WHOLLY, AROUND **THE PERSON OF THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF.**

These are reminders of imperial authority flowing from popular acclamation. These events become all the more essential as imperial popularity wanes. No matter how selective and narrowly unrepresentative the audience, its enthusiastic acclamation is broadcast to all as though it were all-American.

But of course, modern America is not ancient Rome, and Americans are not generally even like old Romans. But it is rather astonishing how some of the rituals of imperial kingship—those that defined imperial authority 1,500 years ago—should have reappeared, unbidden and unrecognized, and yet with such crystal fidelity in our own politics.

Moreover these echoes, however strongly they have sounded over the past four years, may well be fading. The entire imperial enterprise erected

around the global war on terrorism seems to be receding, if not heading toward wholesale collapse.

But the imperial moment was real. For a time at least the American Republic came close to being transformed—in operating politics if not in its actual constitution—into an empire.

We would be wise at the very least to acknowledge how close we came to the politically irreparable. We should also recognize what attends the transformation to empire. For a time, national politics came to revolve dangerously like old empires, and almost wholly, around the person of the commander in chief. Everywhere it was believed that the fate of the nation was in his hands, that he would protect us, that he would lead us to victory—and moreover that the people were passive onlookers in a great struggle run by the emperor.

Two convergent conditions made this happen.

The prodigal symbolism of 9/11—whose emotional power transcended Pearl Harbor—demanded a national narrative on the scale of America's great wars, especially World War II. This was not simply a war narrative but a sacred war narrative. It alone seemed to demand a struggle between good and evil and an American national messianic mission of world redemption—or at least Islamic-world redemption.

At that moment, Americans were not only emotionally vulnerable, their emotions inclined them toward the comforting and the mythically familiar. We were ready for a great war that would unify the nation, vanquish evil, and lead to a better world. We were primed, in short, for a war of national transcendence.

And this administration was ready to give America a military catharsis. Americans were ready for the war leadership of a commander in chief. But the administration took the all-powerful Great War trope and shaped it into an imperial rather than republican vessel of authority.

Like Rome, the administration made victory the foundation of authority. It was implied that a series of campaigns would be necessary to achieve millennial goals such as "democracy in the Middle East." The situation called for active and constant presidential leadership. Going further, the entire management of the war would be the president's alone: there would be no government of national unity, no national mobilization, and no conscription. Not only was the president acting as commander in chief, he had undergone a metamorphosis: his person now fully inhabited an imperial station.

Furthermore, the administration also transformed the war into a permanent dispensation for imperial authority. The "long war" was designed to take normal politics and normal expectations off the table. By accepting the reality of the long war, moreover, Americans were encouraged to submit to a working imperial constitution. In practice this meant widespread expansion of executive powers at home as well as abroad.

But now "his own" closest retainers have deserted him, and even the military is no longer *ton idion*. And so, according to ancient story, the emperor is increasingly isolated, if not quite alone.

Our very strategy now founders because it was vested entirely in the cockpit of one man's vision. So what is next? Where do we go from here? What lessons can we draw from the past five years?

First, the office of emperor as bringer of Eternal Victory is now a bankrupt, rotten concept. The quest to fulfill this

triumphant identity did not bring victory but instead visibly weakened American world authority and domestic cohesion. Arguably no future leader will touch the model of triumphal rulership for a very long time. Therefore future executives will be less tempted to transform themselves into working imperial persons.

Second, even if the model of triumphal rulership has been discredited, the other imperial dispensation—the “long war” trope—is still alive and well, so even the next president might be tempted to renew a state of national emergency and become a permanent war leader. Then, if a real war rears up, the lure of triumphal rulership will beckon yet again.

But national emergencies are nonetheless real, and the political-military role of commander in chief was designed to deal with crisis. We must also remember that the slide beyond this, to imperial mode after 9/11, was more like an opportunistic pushing of norm and form rather than a permanent transformation. After all, we did not end up with anything like real triumphal rulership but only in contrast, its sordid failure.

Perhaps the lesson for all of us is in how quickly an imperial enterprise took root in the American presidency in the wake of a single—if pushing-all-the-buttons flamboyant—attack. Moreover, that enterprise was supremely confident: it was fully prepared to transform the office of president into that of an imperial *victor ac triumphator*. There was the real possibility, however remote it might actually have been, of an American political transformation.

Therefore, if nothing else, we should be all the more alert to future imperial temptation. ■

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Critics who have noted 80-year-old grandmothers and little children being searched by airport security

screeners are now being joined by the most senior official in the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), who has testified that the current system is “overly rigid, static, and predictable.” Worse still, its structural problems mean that it can easily be “engineered around” by terrorists or criminals who do their homework to figure out how it works. The comments by TSA Director Kip Hawley on the failings of the system were delivered before the Senate Commerce Committee and came in the wake of a still classified report by the Government Accountability Office indicating that border security can easily be circumvented. TSA is employing advanced technologies at border entry points, but the cost of such systems is high and they are only slowly being introduced. They also reduce the screening process to a series of mechanical steps that can be beaten by criminals or terrorists who “game” the system and find the flaws in the procedures. There is also a problem with the screeners themselves, many of whom are currently low-wage contractors who turn over quickly, meaning that experienced security personnel are few and far between. Plans to introduce a corps of so-called super screeners who will be trained to look for behavior recognition symptoms that reveal fear, stress, or deception are proceeding but have been inhibited by budget constraints.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has let the cat out of the bag,

stating publicly that the Iraqi Shi’ites and other Shi’ites in the Persian Gulf region are more loyal to Iran than to their own countries. Mubarak, agreeing with the Saudi position on Iraq, stated somewhat diplomatically that civil war there “has almost started,” though adding somewhat more pointedly that the country is on the brink of destruction. Mubarak’s comments were unusually frank and appear to express a growing conviction by several Sunni Arab countries that Iran will be the big winner after an Iraqi government is formed. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa’ud al Faysal has said both publicly and privately that Iraq was being torn by sectarian violence and that ultimately this has been the responsibility of the United States. Jordan, Kuwait, and the Emirates have all more quietly joined in the pessimistic foreign Sunni assessment of the situation. The Sunni neighbors all see Iraq falling under Iranian hegemony and Tehran increasing its influence over Shi’ites throughout the region.



It’s not all glamour being a beauty queen in Iraq.

Having received a series of death threats, Silva Shahakian went into hiding shortly after being crowned Miss Iraq on April 12. Shahakian, a Christian, was given the title when the original winner, also a Christian, was warned that she would be killed and prudently decided to resign and flee the country. Two other candidates also resigned even before they were offered the crown. Several Islamic groups had denounced the competition, calling it the “Queen of Infidels” pageant. It is unclear whether Shahakian will appear at the Miss Universe competition in Los Angeles on July 23.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.

Immorality Play

At Duke University, white male athletes are guilty until proven innocent.

By Bill English

AMONG THE INTELLECTUAL fashions in higher education today, few are as pervasive as the belief that all human behavior is reducible to predictable, material causes. As much as I am inclined to reject this view, the unfolding of the Duke lacrosse scandal in recent weeks has given me reasons to reconsider.

As a doctoral student in Duke's Department of Political Science, I drew a front-row seat for a drama that could not have been more perfectly crafted for a made-for-TV movie. The particulars are now familiar: three white Duke Lacrosse players allegedly gang-raped, sodomized, and choked a single black mother, hired as a stripper for a private team party. Add to the mix the hypocritical rhetoric of the academic Left, the suspense of DNA testing, and a local election season and you have a truly volatile environment. Before the first report hit the papers in late March, the stage was set. Since then, the events have unfolded with such impeccable logic that it is hard to imagine any free agency involved in the chain of reactions—hard even to imagine that the accused students could not be guilty.

The first of many e-mails arrived on Saturday, March 25 from a progressive campus listserv. It linked to a local paper's breaking coverage and announced a vigil that evening to be held outside the party house. The feeling I had upon reading that e-mail was much like the sensation of the first tremor before an earthquake. There was no question that a seismic episode was about to com-

mence, only a question as to how long it would take to run its course. Coincidentally, that Monday inaugurated the previously scheduled "sexual assault awareness week" on Duke's campus. Various "women's issues" listservs were immediately abuzz with commentary about the lacrosse team, periodically interspersed with advertisements for the week's events, like "breast-casting," a workshop in which women could make plaster casts of their bosoms to boost their self confidence.

By Tuesday, professors began to compose their personal declarations of outrage, e-mailing them to Duke's president and copying everyone they knew. Exuding an air of self-righteous indignation, more than one professor was aghast at the possibility of there being a "culture of privilege" or "underage drinking" associated with the Duke campus, let alone gang rape. Faculty demanded that the lacrosse coach be fired and suggested that players on scholarship have their funding suspended because they hadn't been able to finger the rapist. A professor of law explained that participants of "helmet" sports are statistically more violent to women. Other commentators used this as an opportunity to illustrate how the lacrosse allegation was but one instance of a pervasive climate of racism and sexism. As the news crews flocked to campus, anyone who would speak was given a podium to do so. The rest of the campus joined the nation in doing what anyone would in the face of an impending train wreck: sit back and watch.

A week after the story broke, I ran into a friend from the History Department at a housewarming party. "So," he asked, "has the scandal ravaged your department as well?" My department, as it turned out, was among the more mature. My friend began to recount the litany of indictments that emanated from the cognoscenti of his department—those who saw this coming and were happy to revel in its confirmation of their disdain for Duke undergraduates. None were happy about the allegations, but finally they had the hard evidence that confirmed their theories of aggressive, white, male, heterosexual domination.

This reaction, which included active protests at the players' residence and calls for an end to their future, was notable in part for the double standard on display. The same ACLU members horrified by the thought of enemy combatants being denied full legal proceedings had little faith in the legal process that would deal with the Duke accused. They certainly did not embrace the presumption of innocence. One astute professor challenged their attitude with an oblique reference to McCarthyism: how interesting that those leftists so appalled by attempts in the '50s to have people fired for refusing to testify now demanded that lacrosse players lose their scholarships for failing to produce the guilty.

In contrast, the reaction of undergraduate students was, by and large, judicious and restrained. Living the actual realities of campus life, they quickly came not to believe the hype when they

saw how Duke appeared in the national media. Yet at the height of the scandal, ordinary campus events were recast in terms of their relationship to lacrosse. Someone just moved in a few doors down. Was it a lacrosse player? One night there was shooting near the lacrosse house. Were people out for revenge? Would students be safe? Publicity was turning into paranoia.

Along the way, a number of students drew attention to the incongruity of letting these accusations dominate all other real news on campus. In the national media the disproportion was even more pronounced. Day after day the leading story was "Duke Rape" next to some minor event like Iran's enrichment of nuclear fuel. Duke's name increasingly became muck by association. Palm Sunday I visited my parents some 300 miles away. A local Catholic priest asked me what I do. "Well, I study politics." He was uninterested and asked me "where?" out of courtesy as he turned away. "Duke," I began, and suddenly he became interested again. A live Duke student had all the allure of a tabloid magazine.

Despite the hysteria that has surrounded the allegations, there are reasons they have stuck. Lacrosse players are, to put it delicately, not known for being good people. The stomach-turning e-mail sent by one team member the night of the party, in which he joked about hiring more strippers, killing and skinning them in the midst of sexual pleasure, provides some insight into the depraved humor that plays well with the lacrosse crowd. We likewise know that shameful racial epithets were, in fact, part of whatever went on that night.

The team had become a center of campus social life in the last few years, as the Duke administration systematically dismantled many of the traditional fraternities and selective living groups for fear of legal liabilities. In the social vacuum

that ensued, cohesive groups like the lacrosse team filled the void by organizing tailgate events and parties, racking up numerous police citations along the way. Commentators have noted that, as a university sport for which there is little audience or prospect for professional advancement, it is hard to not to view lacrosse as affirmative action for wealthy, academically underachieving students from the Maryland and New Jersey suburbs. That is to say, the players as a group do not exactly command sympathy. Nonetheless, as more evidence comes to light it increasingly appears that the players are simply jerks and not rapists—much to the chagrin of those who initially called for their heads.

Arrests have been made and charges filed. The district attorney will head into his tough primary waving this visible victory. One of the accused has an alibi. Someone is lying and not giving in. It seems that a full trial will proceed. In the

the challenges of becoming a decent human being. Although not everyone turns to strippers and beer for consolation, the mediocrity of campus social life is worth sociological note.

When the accusations of rape first surfaced, the story accorded so well with the intellectual conceits of the Left and the tabloid tastes of the public that it was hard for many to imagine that the lacrosse players would not have acted out this drama for which they were supposedly destined. But, after some investigation, various resources have surfaced to contest this account. A distinguished professor at Duke noted in the days following the accusations that the best student he ever had at Duke was, in fact, a lacrosse player. Moreover, this former student had been killed in the World Trade Center, apparently delayed after phoning his family because he stopped to help others escape the building.

THE CAMPUS WILL BE CURSED TO ENDURE FORUM AFTER FORUM ON RACISM AND SEXISM, WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT REALLY WENT ON AT THAT TERRIBLE PARTY.

meantime, the Duke campus has endured a lot of aggravating soul searching. For the foreseeable future, the campus will be cursed to endure forum after forum on racism and sexism, without knowing what really went on at that terrible party.

There is, however, a more profound problem at Duke, which this scandal has served to highlight and for which there exists no easy, therapeutic resolution or form of judicial review. Having abandoned any basic claim to moral formation, higher education does not know how to deal with wayward individuals, which many late adolescents are to some degree. And in most of their coursework, students are unlikely to encounter the intellectual resources with which to reflect on and transcend

Perhaps, then, those who play helmet sports are capable of good. Perhaps, too, the accused still deserve fair trials because our expectations about character do not have the determined rigor of science. And perhaps these students are indeed guilty. In the final analysis, although the Duke scandal has all the sound, fury, and logic of a natural disaster, it also signifies that the modern academy has not yet rid us of the traditional problems of being human. More likely, the academy has simply rendered us less intellectually equipped to deal with them. ■

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It's Not Just the Economy, Stupid

Illegal immigration is about more than jobs — it's about national identity.

By W. James Antle III

GEORGE TAPLIN sometimes gets out of bed before dawn to keep watch at the local day-laborer site. The *Washington Post Magazine* once described him as having “the look of a man who has spent an adulthood rising while most of the world sleeps.” Yet the founder of the Herndon chapter of the Minutemen isn't just an early riser—he has become the public face of opposition to illegal immigration in northern Virginia.

It is the kind of dedication one might expect from a person whose livelihood is endangered by competition from low-wage illegal workers. Except Taplin's activism was sparked less by economic uncertainty—if anything, the publicity he has generated as a critic of Herndon's day-laborer site is a bigger source of workplace anxiety—than his feeling that working to curb illegal immigration was a patriotic thing to do. He seems as worried about the immigrants being unassimilated as undocumented.

The willingness to rise early to snap pictures of illegal-seeking contractors in 7-Eleven parking lots may be uncommon, but the underlying concerns about the consequences of porous borders are not. Many Americans don't see illegal immigration solely as an issue of who gets jobs. To these voters, it is primarily about fairness to people who obey the law, foreign and native-born alike, and the social fabric of the communities in which they live. Treating people who enter illegally the same as legal immigrants offends their sense of fairness, while the failure of newcomers to assimilate offends their sense of community.

Even when the issue appears to be economics, these patriotic impulses emerge. In April, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) gave a speech to a hostile crowd at the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department. While the union's leadership has reconciled itself to the cheap-labor lobby's demands, many of the rank-and-file have not, and the senator was booed for his guest-worker advocacy.

The thin-skinned McCain laid down a challenge to his audience—he sarcastically offered to provide anyone present a \$50-an-hour job picking lettuce in Arizona. “I'll take it!” one man shouted. McCain shot back that he wouldn't be able to handle the work for the entire season. He didn't stay long enough to take applications, but one immigration-restrictionist group rectified the oversight.

Project USA posted on its website over 3,000 applications from people who said they would be willing to take McCain's offer and why. There were many messages from people who said they needed the money or were unemployed, as well as some facetious posts. (“I'll take it. It must be government money, or you wouldn't be offering it.”) The bulk of the responses, however, came from people who were offended by the implication that illegal aliens work harder than Americans.

“Senator McCain should hire me to pick his lettuce because I am an American first and a lettuce picker second,” read one reply. A second respondent said McCain should choose him “because I am a U.S. citizen and I have

always worked for a living.” Another quipped that at \$50 per hour, “I can become one of the country's fat cats... and buy the Senate's votes on immigration.” Beneath the levity one can see that many Americans fear that illegal immigration is taking more than their jobs.

This shouldn't be very surprising. While illegal immigration benefits many employers and imperils the employment and wages of a large number of working-class Americans, its overall effect on the country's gross domestic product is believed to be relatively small. But the cultural impact of 11 to 20 million illegal aliens—on top of more than 40 years of uninterrupted legal mass immigration—can be huge, especially in the areas where they are concentrated. Without assimilation and with the constant reinforcement from new arrivals from their home countries, these immigrants can often separate themselves culturally, ethnically, and linguistically from the rest of society.

Such national-identity issues seldom play a major role in the Beltway immigration debate, however. The business lobby downplays the possibility that their willing workers might not be assimilating while professional immigration reformers often prefer to concentrate on economic or national-security arguments against open borders. But politicians know better than to ignore assimilation completely. Even amnesty proposals often contain sections that are supposed to encourage English skills and participation in American civic life.

The compromise legislation introduced by Sens. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) and Mel Martinez (R-Fla.), for example, expects long-term illegal aliens to demonstrate knowledge of English and American civics before qualifying for amnesty. Even the illegals the bill would require to exit the country before becoming temporary workers would be encouraged to learn civics (as if U.S. Government 101 courses are widely available in Guatemalan villages).

Of course, the 1986 amnesty contained similar requirements—including a mandated 40 hours of English instruction—and there is little evidence that this facilitated the assimilation of its beneficiaries or subsequent illegals. The bottom line, however, is that any legislation with a serious chance of passing is at least going to pay lip service to patriotic and cultural assimilation.

Elections force politicians to concede, however grudgingly, that cultural cohesion is a legitimate issue, but some commentators seem to disagree. An article on *The New Republic's* website described the Herndon Minutemen's concerns about illegal-immigrant behavior as "overblown" and "in some cases borderline racist." John Judis, in a *TNR* cover story, referred to "Americans who are offended by the growing presence... of Latinos in their midst." The *Wall Street Journal* commiserated with "the anxiety that many Americans feel at this rapid pace of demographic change" yet urged politicians to avoid "the nativist brigades" and "the chauvinist conservatism usually associated with the European right."

The implication seems to be this: it might be okay to worry about terrorists slipping across the border undetected, but arguments based on assimilation are suspect. You might be racist if you object to bilingual education in your children's schools, linguistic stratification in your downtown, changes in local customs, and rising social-services costs

reflected on your tax bill. Complaints about neighborhoods sprouting overcrowded, dormitory-style houses, public urination in the street, and gangs like MS-13 are even worse.

To be sure, ethnic stereotyping can play a role in these anxieties, and some immigration-reform proponents are guilty of using demeaning, overheated rhetoric. Certainly criticism of immigrant behavior can have racial undertones, although they may also reflect the problems that accompany large numbers of unattached, occasionally idle young men—ask anyone who has ever lived near a college fraternity house. And if the same complaints were being leveled against fraternity members, no one would deny that they are legitimate neighborhood quality-of-life issues.

But most people who are concerned about the social consequences of immigration aren't intrinsically hostile to Latinos; some of them are Hispanic themselves. One needn't reject the legacy of Ellis Island or the rest of America's rich immigration history to believe immigrants should enter legally and embrace their new country when they arrive. "We're not anti-immigrant," says Taplin.

Yet a majority does reject the idea that our immigration policy should be creating a bicultural, bi-national country in the United States. There is nothing welcoming or racially enlightened about admitting large numbers of immigrants to toil as servants for us without ever becoming a full part of our communities.

For many years, open-borders apologists denied that any such cultural balkanization was happening. And certainly there are many cases of successful assimilation one can highlight. But a helpful side-effect of the current incarnation of the immigration debate has been the mass demonstrations in favor of amnesty. As Thomas Sowell recently wrote in his syndicated column, they

"revealed the ugly truth behind the fog of pious words and clever political spin from the media and from both Democrats and Republicans in Washington."

"Were they even asking for amnesty?" Sowell continued. "They didn't sound like they were asking for anything. They sounded like they were telling. Demanding. Threatening." Polls show a majority of Americans reacted similarly. According to a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics survey, 71 percent thought the protests were inappropriate and 47 said it made them less likely to support easing immigration laws—only 20 percent said it made them more likely.

Authentic irredentism may be rarer than it appears through the prism of the demonstrations. But when thousands of people can be found chanting Spanish slogans and waving Mexican flags while demanding changes in U.S. law, it is clear that the mechanisms of assimilation are as broken as our country's border-enforcement policies. The point of our immigration system isn't to satiate labor-market demands, however important the economy is. It is to create new Americans. Here we often seem to be failing—and the bipartisan coalition that wants permanently disenfranchised indentured servants in the form of guest workers seems to no longer want to try.

Paradoxically, the people most opposed to illegal aliens—as well as unsustainable legal immigration levels—may be doing more to promote a successful immigration policy than the amnesty and guest-worker proponents. "To make immigration succeed, we need to curb some immigration," Robert Samuelson recently observed in the *Washington Post*. "That's why it's vital to control our border."

If so, then people like Taplin are right to shrug off labels like nativist, Know-Nothing or, in Bill Kristol's construction, "yahoo." Instead they can argue that a better word applies—patriot. ■

Populist Professor

Daniel Patrick Moynihan's courage often failed, but by the end of his career he had come to oppose imperial ventures and cherish localism.

By Bill Kauffman

HAS THERE BEEN an American politician as complex and contradictory as Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan? He was an Irish Catholic yet a foppish Anglophile. He had the head of a reformist intellectual and the heart of a working-class regular. Certainly he was the only Harvard social scientist who could be greeted with backslapping beer-buying bonhomie in a Buffalo bar. The product of a broken home, Moynihan was courageous and far-sighted in analyzing the disastrous consequences of illegitimacy and the fracturing of the two-parent family.

A New Deal/Fair Deal Democrat who seldom voted against a government appropriation, Moynihan was a gimlet-eyed critic of the welfare state and, in his creative dotage, a practical decentralist of the kind no longer found in the democracy. He believed in international law, magnificent public architecture, and labor unions. He delivered ramblingly learned extemporaneous speeches on recondite subjects while running shrewdly effective campaigns. He detested platitudes yet read the *New York Times*. He was a superb pork-barrel pol disguised as the absent-minded professor. He voted with the liberals but provided talking points to the conservatives. He trimmed, he temporized, he compromised, he was cowardly when the times (if never the *Times*) demanded valor. He left no legislative mark. He is irreplaceable.

Not only was Moynihan a deft dipper

in the pork barrel, he was also among the savviest pols of his age. Consider 1982, the only year in which the Republicans did not write off the race against incumbent Moynihan as unwinnable before it even started.

By far the weakest candidate in the Republican field—Assemblywoman Florence Sullivan—was nominated over her wealthy opponents, Muriel Siebert and Whitney North Seymour. The primary results were a shocker. How did the pathetically underfunded Sullivan come up with the funds to pay for a last-minute mail blitz that was generally credited with putting her over the top against her deep-pocketed foes? One might almost suspect the invisible hand of Moynihan—but no, a Mugwump would never do such a thing.

Moynihan trounced Sullivan, winning two-thirds of the vote—despite being targeted by the New York branch of the Moral Majority, as the senator pointed out in a stupendously silly observation. He'd have whipped the early Republican frontrunner by an even handier margin: former Congressman Bruce Caputo, the presumptive GOP nominee, dropped out of the race after newspaper reports—fed by Moynihan staff leaks—revealed that he had manufactured a military record for himself. Caputo was lucky: more, ah, personal revelations were forthcoming had he received the nomination. The professor played hardball. Or at least he hired men who knew how to play.

So much nonsense has been written about Moynihan over the years. He was the absent-minded professor, lost in lofty cerebration, neglecting grubby politicking, blah blah. In fact, most of the books he published during his Senate years were ghostwritten by staffers. (Every biennium I enjoyed the line in Michael Barone's *Almanac of American Politics* in which Barone cluelessly confided, "He is one senator who reads widely and—his ornate style leaves no doubt—writes his own speeches and articles.") Moynihan's courage failed him at critical moments, not only in his refusal to stop the Senate candidacy of non-New Yorker Hillary Clinton but in his last-minute retreat from what would have been a headline-making—perhaps even career-breaking—act of conscience on the matter of abortion. From Pat Moynihan I learned, among other things, the soul-corroding effect of cowardice.

* * *

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the most prominent politician-professor since Woodrow Wilson, was born not in a fire-trap tenement to a shanty colleen but in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to a father who was a jaunty drunk and newspaper reporter (or do I repeat myself?) and a mother from one of the most prominent families in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Father John took a job as an advertising copywriter at RKO and moved the family to the Stygian nothingness of the New York

suburbs. His drinking and whoring and erratic behavior spun out of control until finally he fled to San Jose, leaving his emotionally unstable wife Margaret and the kids to a transient life in a series of coldwater flats in the upper 80s and lower 90s of Manhattan.

Choked in the interstices between the precarious middle class and the downwardly mobile working class, the Moynihans bounced from Queens to Manhattan to suburban New Jersey. The senator's myth-makers, himself included, liked to say that he came of age in Hell's Kitchen, though Ed Koch amended that to "Hell's Condominium."

In lurches and purposeful staggers, young Moynihan made his way, as well as his myth. Stevedore. City College scholar. Bohemian sailor who loved jazz and was nicknamed ... Jellyroll? Two-fisted Tufts grad student. Chatty aide to Gov. Averell Harriman. Convivial wit in a series of administrations, Democrat and Republican, until in 1976 he stabbed that main chance good and hard, winning a crowded U.S. Senate Democratic primary and then trouncing incumbent James Buckley.

Moynihan was a young man of the Left, a reader of Erskine Caldwell, with a pugnacious populist streak. His prep school friends, he announced, needed "a good swift kick in their blue blood asses. They need to get hurt once in a while. They need to get some feeling in them."

He was a Tertium Quid in the New York politics of the 1950s and early '60s: his head agreed with the reformers, but his heart belonged to Tammany, to the ass-kicked and ass-kicking ethnic Catholics who had not gone to college, who had never read Sartre, and whom "the liberals, almost exclusively a middle- and upper-class group," held in contempt.

Pat Moynihan had the rare talent to blend Mugwumpery, with its commitment to honest and open government

and its perhaps naïve faith in meritocracy, to a distinctly anti-Mugwump disposition. He would write trenchant position papers for the blue bloods whose asses he had just kicked. Alas, rare is the flower that can reach its fullest efflorescence in the soot and stink of Gotham.

The great tragedy of Pat Moynihan's life was that his toper dad dragged the family out of Oklahoma. Had the Moynihans remained in Tulsa, young Pat could have matured in a healthy American environment, far from the Trotskyist miasma settled over the CUNY cafeteria. In retrospect, there is a depressing inevitability in his evolution toward standard-issue Cold War liberalism. He had a visceral hatred of parlor pinks, so he was a reflexive anticommunist, mistaking—as did some of the others with whom he briefly pitched the tent of neo-conservatism—unconditional support for the projection of U.S. military might for authentic patriotism. Domestically, he seems to have viewed the New Deal–Fair Deal regulatory state as the only feasible alternative to outright socialism—but then on the grimy streets and in the feculent air of his youthful haunts, those were the only choices presented to a boy not clad in silk stockings.

Had he been raised an Oklahoman, Pat Moynihan might have become a towering populist leader, a William Jennings Bryan of our very own. Imagine a Moynihan weaned on Alfalfa Bill Murray, far from the Harrimans and Kristols. A Moynihan whose temperament would have led him, naturally, to a Jeffersonian populism with deep roots in even the most desiccated tumbleweed acre. Yet a Moynihan sophisticated enough to avoid the snares that claim the cruder populists—a sinful racism, in particular.

Alack, we will have to be satisfied, or not, with the Moynihan we got. I have written elsewhere of his martinet qualities. He was a wretched boss, as I

learned in my two-and-a-half-year stint (1981–83) as a research assistant and then legislative assistant to a man every bit as worthy as Webster had been of bearing the sobriquets "the Godlike Daniel" and "Black Dan." By the time my comet streaked across the Moyniverse, the Senate's only dairy farmer, as he absurdly called himself, was down to his last few drops of the milk of human kindness. He was the drunkenly petulant verification of Henry Adams's aphorism that "No man, however strong, can serve ten years as schoolmaster, priest, or Senator, and remain fit for anything else." And Henry should know.

One of the oldest practices in the political burlesque is exaggerating one's closeness to Powerful Men. The classic example is Sinclair Lewis's *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*, in which a blowhard on a train bores his seatmates with intimate tales about a president whom he bumped into on a college green decades ago. I am not quite so bumptious a fool—almost, but not quite.

I had not expected my own Moynihan Story to have a touching ending. But it did. Our reunion was over a weirdly delightful and drunken three-hour lunch in Syracuse just months before the deathdew lay cold on his brow.

My friend Karl Zinsmeister and I had not seen the old browbeater in 19 years. We expected him to mistake us for the bellboys, since one servant is pretty much the same as the next to a Senate lifer, but he was downright avuncular. "Lads, how a-bout a drink!?" he chirped as we shook hands in the lobby of the downtown Syracuse Sheraton. The bar was dark, as bars usually are at 10:45 a.m., but the tapster's meek protest of "we're not open till noon" was no match for Pat Moynihan in full thirst. The bar opened early.

Karl is a teetotaler, so I did my Irish-quadron best to keep up with the senator, though I dropped out at four glasses

of pinot grigio (his matutinal nectar). We spoke of many things that day, from the dream of an independent Brooklyn to the obduracy of New Yorkers who support a leviathan that means his state harm to his somewhat befuddled pride in the Moynihan alumni (Tim Russert and a cast of dozens) made good, or at least semi-famous. It's as if dear old Dad, after 20 years of bummin' and slummin' and an absence that made no hearts grow fonder, wakes to find his child delivering the high school valedictory address. How in hell did that happen?

As the glasses of wine emptied, the speech slurred, the eloquence dimmed. References to 9-11 became "7-11," as if bin Laden had declared jihad against Slurpees. And yet even in the wine-darkened noontide of a Syracuse hotel bar, the past was present. Our rambling chat was interrupted by a middle-aged black man who with a hybrid French-Irish accent represented himself as a former Black Panther. "Patrick Moynihan!" he boomed in a patois brogue, and after a hearty handshake and cordialities about the '60s, "when I was way over there, on the other side," he took his leave, with a theatrically whispered and mischievous farewell: "Benign Neglect, Patrick. Benign Neglect!"

Moynihan never could outrun that artless expression. It had been three decades since he had used the phrase in a confidential memo to President Nixon in which he proposed a moratorium on new racial initiatives; torn out of context, "benign neglect" was used to suggest that Moynihan was anti-black. The libel never died. In fact, it would cripple him in largely unseen ways. Moynihan had been so shaken by the reaction to the Nixon memo, and his earlier 1965 report to President Johnson on the instability of the black family, that he swore off race matters, spending his Senate career uttering the sort of numbing platitudes that, however unworthy

of a serious man, do keep Democratic primary challengers at bay. Moynihan, unlike Eugene McCarthy, took to heart Gore Vidal's puckish maxim: "The price of freedom is eternal discretion."

And yet, in the bibulous twilight of his career, his insights grew keen. He toyed with a radical decentralism, wondering aloud—though no one listened—whether or not most functions of the federal government ought to be turned back to the states and cities. He called for the abolition of the CIA, the return of American troops from Europe, and a foreign policy redolent of Oklahoma rather than Manhattan. (Moynihan would have been greatly amused a while back, when New York drivers received

itary establishments" and "permanent alliances with any portion of the world" and "excessive partiality for one foreign nation," the last of which, Washington warned, leads to a black-is-white inversion wherein "real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious." After this perfunctory nod, the Senate spends the next 364 days of the year repudiating the Father of Our Country. But it's the thought that counts, right?

In his dotage, Moynihan strayed from the pack and started flying with the Byrd—if not eight miles high, then at least far enough above the ground to see dimly the outlines of the wreckage of the Old Republic.

BY 1993 HE WAS CALLING FOR A **COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM EUROPE. THE COLD WAR, HE INSISTED, WAS HISTORY.**

letters from the Department of Motor Vehicles advising us that our "Liberty plates" were to be replaced by "Empire plates." Symbolism weighs heavy, even from the bumper of an automobile.)

One of the strangest rituals in the U.S. Senate is the annual reading of President Washington's Farewell Address. The chore of recitation usually falls to a freshman nonentity eager to curry favor by performing what is regarded as a drudge task. The chamber is empty, save for the sole classical relict: West Virginia Democrat Robert Byrd, the pomaded knight from the mountaineer state, who with his florid defenses of the U.S. Constitution against the PATRIOT Act, the Iraq War, the line-item veto, and the effluvium of Big Government Republicanism has earned himself a place in Valhalla.

Pat Moynihan used to be there, too, taking in the bizarre sight of some junior Honorable stumbling through Washington's injunctions against "overgrown mil-

He began to use pejoratives like "national security state" and "military-industrial complex." True to Washington's dictum about avoiding permanent alliances, by 1993 he was calling for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe. The Cold War, he insisted, was history. "It's over! It's over!" he thumped to *Newsweek*.

He and Pat Buchanan are the only two American politicians who seem to have rethought matters in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution. Both well-read Catholics, distinctive literary stylists ... well, the kinship only goes so far. But it's there. Like Buchanan, Moynihan took a deep breath and a long look and came up radical and reactionary. In 1991 he proposed to abolish the Central Intelligence Agency, which had been "repeatedly wrong about the major political and economic questions entrusted to its analysis." (He would transfer intelligence gathering to the Department of State.) His "End of the Cold War Act of

1991” sought to shine light on the intelligence budget and sharply curtail the ability of the executive to bar visitors on ideological grounds—proposals unthinkable a decade later, in the age of Homeland Security.

Like Buchanan, Moynihan eloquently opposed the first Gulf War, and in Gene McCarthyite language he mused, “I find it extraordinary ... that the President should so personalize the encounter with this particular thug in Baghdad: the most recent thug in Baghdad, not the last by any means. There will be others.” He warned of a “permanent crisis,” of what the revisionist historian Harry Elmer Barnes and Gore Vidal have called “perpetual war for perpetual peace.”

The enemy “used to be totalitarian, Leninist, communism. Without a moment’s pause almost, we shifted the enemy to this person at the head of this insignificant, flawed country whose boundaries were drawn in 1925 in a tent by an English colonial official ...”

By his last decade, not only had he gone anti-imperialist, he had also lost his New Deal faith in centralization, consolidation, and bigness. Since 1977, his first year in the Senate, Moynihan had published a report on “New York State and the Federal Fisc,” in which he documented New York’s balance of payments with the federal government. The exercise had its pork-barrelish aspect—we used its annual finding that New York is shortchanged to argue for altered formulae, special grants, and other means of raining alms on the Empire State. But by 1991, in the 15th edition of the Fisc, Moynihan had recanted. The senator asked if it might be

time we began to ask just how much a bargain Federal programs are for a state such as New York? I know. This is heresy. Since the time of Theodore Roosevelt, at very the least, New Yorkers have consis-

tently supported an expansion of the programs of the Federal government. As, for example, the first Roosevelt’s Bureau of Reclamation, which has brought such bounty to 17 Western states. Decade after decade, New Yorkers have been thinking up new Federal programs. The Interstate Highway System, for example, a concept of the second Roosevelt. In the beginning these were often inspired and hugely successful programs. Rarely, however, did we look to our particular interest. The Interstate system is the perfect example. New York built its own principal segment of the system as a toll road; then paid gas taxes to build the same toll-free road all over the rest of the country. The years since have seen one such instance after another, even if there have been no New York Presidents. New Yorkers can be counted on to support Federal programs that redistribute resources away from New York. We manage to get back a share of Federal outlays proportionate to our population. But with a higher nominal income we continuously, systematically send resources elsewhere. Worse yet, what money does come back more and more comes back loaded with restrictions and strictures that New Yorkers would never adopt on their own. Call it the Jesse Helms effect, named for my good friend, the senior Senator from North Carolina.

Moynihan goes on to examine the case of education, federal aid to which has long been a cornerstone of New York’s suffocating bipartisan consensus: “[A]fter a generation of Federal aid, and Federal preachment about education, New York hasn’t got a lot to show. Is it wrong to ask whether we would have done better to

have kept our money and energy at home?” To ask the question is to answer it. Pat Moynihan had placed himself, by 1992, far to the decentralist right of his party on domestic issues and just as far to its antiwar left on foreign policy.

But no one paid any mind. A year and a half later, Bill Clinton, a neoliberal Democrat whom Moynihan despised, was president. The senator, who by 1992 was calling himself a “Mugwump,” would go into fitful opposition, especially to Clinton’s Rube Goldberg health-care proposal. Like maverick California Democrat Jerry Brown, Moynihan floated a cut in the regressive Social Security payroll tax. But he prized too much the headpats and medals of the Establishment to follow Al Smith’s path of Democratic dissent.

Like Moynihan, Smith had a genuine feeling for life, and tenderness, on the block. Yet the modern nepenthe has erased any national memory of this progressive Democrat who despised FDR as callow and shallow and spent his declining years as smiling front man for the pointless Empire State Building.

Smith’s womb had been St. James parish and Manhattan’s Fourth Ward, close-knit communities whence he derived a politics of subsidiarity. Like Moynihan, Smith’s staff was Jewish-Catholic, an eclectic mix ranging from the Alabama-born Jewish states-rights liberal Joseph Proskauer to the pestiferous Robert Moses, who would later raze the neighborhoods Smith eulogized.

The parallels with Moynihan go a respectable ways. Smith was wet in theory (he signed the repeal of the mechanism by which New York enforced prohibition), Moynihan was wet in, ah, practice. Despite their liberalism, neither was ever trusted by feminists, Smith for especially good reason: he, like many Catholics, was lukewarm at best toward women’s suffrage. He belittled the Equal Rights Amendment, remarking, “I

believe in equality, but I cannot nurse a baby." To the extent such a thing can be measured by terrene observers, Smith was the more devout Catholic, and his papistry was a factor—but just a factor, for 64 of his 87 electoral votes came from the allegedly anti-Roman South—in his landslide loss to Herbert Hoover in 1928. (As the gag went, the night of the election the pope received a one-word telegram: "Unpack.")

No one ever accused Pat Moynihan of taking orders from the Vatican. He broke with the church when it was politically expedient for him to do so, and he never found the moxie to reverse course. In the late 1980s, Moynihan prepared a declaration of what would have been a stunning volte-face on the most undiscussable of subjects: abortion. It was in the form of a letter to the cardinal apologizing for his pusillanimity, his previous inability to break ranks with Democratic orthodoxy and cast the pro-life votes impelled by his church and his own belief. The letter was never sent; he was talked out of it by an adjutant for

the debate was one of those sound-and-fury distractions over largely factitious "issues" that have not a blessed thing to do with how we live now. Breaking ranks over a gruesome sideshow: this is what passes for iconoclasm in a conformist age.

In our chat shortly before his death, I asked the senator if there was "a place today for pro-life Irish Catholics in the Democratic Party." He was pretty well plastered by this time, but through the wine-dark haze he murmured, "I have not gotten over the denial of Governor [Robert] Casey [to speak before the Democratic Convention] in 1992. I thought that was shameless. It almost made me start voting differently." Almost. And Scott Norwood's right leg almost won the Super Bowl for Buffalo. When Pat Moynihan might have changed the terms of debate, he was silent.

The habit of caution so necessary to a sustained political career breeds, ineluctably, gutlessness, even among those who cultivate a reputation for straight shooting. I once interviewed

even in his pasturage, far removed from the corridors of power, in a station in which absolutely no one gave a damn what he thought, he was incapable of supporting an old friend if that friend had crossed the GOP authorities.

Lyn the Niddering, meet Pat the Caitiff. Like most Democrats who had come of age with postwar internationalism, Moynihan was a convinced free trader. Yet he voted protectionist. He once told me, "This must never become law"—fine, but he was speaking of a domestic-content bill that he had cosponsored. In the early 1980s, he voted a straight ADA liberal line, a record that can be explained, in part, by Moynihan's nettling fear that he was going to wake up in 1944 and have to contend with a spirited challenge from Vito Marcantonio and the American Labor Party.

Similarly, Pat Moynihan detested the Clintons, but once Hillary declared her candidacy for his seat never was heard a discouraging word about that paragon of placelessness. He kept quiet, and the press kept gushing.

And what does a lifetime of sedulously kissing up to Sulzbergers get you? Two days before Hillary Clinton was elected U.S. senator from New York despite never having resided in the Empire State, the *New York Times Magazine*, which Gore Vidal once called "that graveyard of prose," but which had been theretofore a reliable producer of Moynihan-the-lovable-drunk-professor boilerplate profiles, published "For the Sake of Argument," in which Jacob Weisberg tore into the superannuated DPM as a "magnificent failure," a maundering blowhard lost in "irrelevance and self-regard" who "lacked the largeness of spirit necessary to transcend his animosities." His once charmingly idiosyncratic prose style had degenerated into "self-absorbed baroque." (Or could it simply be that Moynihan wrote better Moynihanese than did his staff ghosts?)

MOYNIHAN PREPARED A DECLARATION OF WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A STUNNING VOLTE-FACE ON THE MOST UNDISCUSSABLE OF SUBJECTS: ABORTION.

the obvious political reasons. I believe only two or three persons ever saw what would have been among the most reviled or admired epistles in recent political history. The man who told me this story contemporaneously—an absolutely impeccable source—remains active in liberal Democratic politics. He would deny it if you asked him about it. But it happened.

The closest Moynihan ever got to repudiating the NARAL line was when he described partial-birth abortion as "infanticide." The choicers looked at him askance, but only for the nonce, for

Lyn Nofziger, one of those true-believing Reaganauts who followed their Ron from Sacramento eastward. After I turned the tape recorder off, he told me that while he was publicly supporting publishing heir Steve Forbes for president, privately he was pulling for Pat Buchanan. I felt an immense surge of pity mixed with contempt. The habit of circumspection, of cowardice masquerading as caution, of dissimulation, had become so much a part of Nofziger—the alleged wild man of the Reagan administration, the straight shooter, the bulwark of candor—that

PSA COUNT UP? TOO MANY TRIPS TO THE BATHROOM?

Help lower your PSA naturally and get the rest your body needs

By Richard Huemer, M.D.

The U.S. Government has announced that they will be conducting the largest ever study on Cancer. The study will determine what are the long-term effects of Selenium and Vitamin E on the Prostate Gland and its potential for protection against Prostate Cancer.

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Selenium (AA chelate)	200 mcg	286%
Zinc (AA chelate, ascorbate)	50 mg	334%
Copper (gluconate)	1 mg	50%
<hr/>		
Saw Palmetto extract	460 mg	*
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Hydrangea root extract	190 mg	*
Bee pollen	170 mg	*
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Moynihan was out of power, out of luck, even out of favor. Still, he parried all of our questions about Hillary, the faithful party man till the end. He was willing to pop off on matters far removed from party lines, however, and in fact from out of left field came the single headline resulting from our talk.

I asked Moynihan, "Would Brooklyn have been better off remaining an independent city?" and he blurted, "Yes. Like Minneapolis-St. Paul."

Brooklyn, the erstwhile "city of homes and churches," fourth-largest city in the union, dissolved itself into the Blob via the pivotal 1894 referendum, its citizens voting to join the City of New York by a vote of 64,744 to 64,467. But testing Daniel Webster's dictum that "[b]ecause a thing has been wrongly done, it does not follow that it can be undone," dreamy secessionist sons of Brooklyn from Pete Hamill to Norman Mailer have sought to divorce their beloved mother from that foul old lech across the river. Moynihan, it seems, had joined them.

Upon its publication in *The American Enterprise*, his answer stirred a brief controversy: East Harlem City Councilman Charles Barron raged to the *New York Sun*, "I just hope the author of 'benign neglect' is not once again coming up with some plan based on the changing demographics" of largely non-white Brooklyn. His colleague Simcha Felder said that it didn't matter if an independent Brooklyn was poorer on its own: "Brooklyn would have to live with the fact that it was just richer in people and culture." Now that's a patriot.

Felder is echoed by Jane Jacobs, the vastly influential urban writer: "Brooklyn and the other boroughs would all be better off on their own. ... Big bureaucracies can't allow for the diversity and the experimentation that are essential to cities." Who but the most obdurate imperialist can possibly take exception to that?

And who but the most humorless ideologue could be unmoved by Pat Moynihan, if only for the magnificence of his failure? I am—no, a piece of me is—one of those ethnic Catholic Democrats whose tribune Moynihan sometimes wished to be but was not. But I laugh still at the thought of the roistering drunken Irishman who secretly wishes to take tea with the Queen. Sure, he mythicized his labor as a stevedore on the waterfront, but I composted my own toil as a factory janitor cleaning the most fetid men's rooms imaginable. His staff was overwhelmingly Ivy League yet he declared that "a party of the working class cannot be dominated by former editors of the *Harvard Crim-*

son." And hell, he hired me. As a Western New York localist, I admire him as the only statewide politician within my lifetime to have a sympathetic understanding of Upstate New York. Moynihan could descant, off the cuff and on the bottle, on the history of the Erie Canal or the significance of Seneca Falls. And he could be bluntly funny. In a 1961 essay in *Commentary*, he called Buffalo a "big, ugly, turbulent city." I asked him if that un-Chamber of Commerce-ish description ever caused him problems in his campaigns. He looked at me incredulously, then asked, "How many people in Buffalo do you think read *Commentary*?"

AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY, PAT MOYNIHAN HAD ARRIVED AT THE JUNCTURE OF CATHOLIC SUBSIDIARITY AND ANTI-IMPERIALIST REALISM.

My two-and-a-half years in the employ of Senator Moynihan were an anarchist-making experience. I came to Washington a memorizer of senatorial facts, a skeptically cheerful liberal, a first-time voter in the year past for Ted Kennedy and John Anderson for president, an awestruck walker through

august halls of state; I left quoting the mid-century anarchist Frank Chodorov: "A government building you regard as a charnel house, which in fact it is; you enter it always under duress, and you never demean yourself by curtsying to its living or dead statuary. The stars on the general's shoulders merely signify that the man might have been a useful member of society; you pity the boy whose military garb identifies his servility. The dais on which the judge sits elevates the body but lowers the man, and the jury box is a place where three-dollar-a-day slaves enforce the law of slavery. You honor the tax dodger. You do not vote because you put too high a value on your vote."

Mind you, my profuse and sentimental localism keeps me from being half as radical as Chodorov. I have friends who are judges, legislators, even soldiers. I vote often, if futilely. I pay town, village, and county taxes without grumbling. (I've a mild objection to state taxes, and I loathe, execrate, and abominate—but pay—federal taxes, which are put to purposes nefarious and even homicidally sinister.) My politics are a blend of Dorothy Day and Henry Thoreau, far from the Cold War liberalism that made Moynihan's reputation, but I can't shake the feeling that at the end of his journey, Pat Moynihan had arrived at the juncture of Catholic subsidiarity and anti-imperialist realism—a place both radical and reactionary, and thus wholly misunderstood. ■

Bill Kauffman's most recent book is Look Homeward, America (ISI Books 2006), from which this essay is adapted.

Looking Out for Numero Uno

While the country's poor flee, Mexico's elite take care of themselves.

By George W. Grayson

MEXICO CITY—A watchword of Mexican politics is “Show me a politician who is poor and I will show you a poor politician.” In accord with this adage, many Mexican officials enjoy generous salaries and lavish fringe benefits. Even as they live princely lifestyles, they and their fellow elites pay little in taxes and refuse to spend sufficient money on education and health care to create opportunities in Mexico—a country that abounds in oil, natural gas, gold, beaches, fish, water, historic treasures, museums, industrial centers, and hard-working people. Rather than mobilizing these bountiful resources to uplift the poor, Mexico's privileged class noisily demands that Uncle Sam open his border wider for the nation's “have nots.”

Consequently, the power brokers have excoriated President George W. Bush's October 2005 proposal to admit temporary workers for up to six years. Deputy Antonio Guajardo Anzaldúa, a member of the left-wing Workers Party and chairman of Chamber of Deputies' Committee on Population, Borders, and Migration Affairs, savaged the initiative as “linking workers with employers without offering them a route toward legalization.” He also criticized “the heavy fine” that would be levied on participants who would be ineligible for American citizenship.

Guajardo's colleague Eliana García Laguna, a stalwart of the leftist-nationalist Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), shrieked that the threat posed by Bush “hurts and injures the interests of Mexicans who for various reasons must

leave our country.” And Heliodoro Díaz Escárrega, leader of the Chamber of Deputies and a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), stated that it “is totally anachronistic to impose penalties on our migrants or erect walls as if we were in the Cold War.” Meanwhile, the legislature's bicameral Permanent Commission lambasted U.S. immigration policy as “racist, xenophobic and a profound violation of human rights.”

Members of President Vicente Fox's National Action Party (PAN) have joined the chorus of self-righteous criticism. They applauded an early January 2006 joint declaration by Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and six Central American countries pledging their opposition to treating migrants who illegally cross into the United States as law-breakers.

This statement neglected to recognize the mounting support of American citizens for curbs on unlawful entries. A Fox News poll conducted in April 2005 found that an overwhelming majority of Americans believe that undocumented immigration is a “very serious” (63 percent) or “somewhat serious” (28 percent) problem for the United States. Sixty percent of respondents to an ABC News/*Washington Post* survey favored erecting a barrier at the border; only 26 percent disapproved. In addition, Mexico's nomenclatura never mentions the 1 million legal immigrants whom the United States admits each year.

Mexico's establishment also keeps quiet about the salaries and benefits that its members receive. Private-sector

executives are especially secretive. Thanks to *Forbes* magazine, however, we know that Mexico leads Latin America with ten billionaires, including telecom mogul Carlos Slim Helú, the world's third richest person with \$30 billion. And an increasing amount of data is available on the earnings of public officials. The numbers show that Mexico's governing class is enriching itself at the country's expense, with exorbitant salaries and bountiful perks. Remember, these are “official” figures. Most politicians have ingenious ways of fattening their bank accounts.

The salaries of top Mexican government officials match or exceed those of comparable figures in Europe and much of the rest of the world. President Vicente Fox (\$236,693), for example, makes more than the leaders of the U.K. (\$211,434), France (\$95,658), Canada (\$75,582), and most other industrialized countries (POTUS earns \$400,000).

The 500 members of Mexico's notoriously irresponsible Chamber of Deputies, which is in session only a few months a year, each made \$148,000 last year in salary and bonuses—roughly on a par with Italian and Canadian legislators and substantially more than their counterparts in Germany (\$105,000), France (\$78,000), and Spain (\$32,311), where living costs are markedly higher. Other legislators in Latin America receive substantially less; for example, those in Bolivia earn \$28,000 for a four-month session. Legislators in the Dominican Republic take home \$68,500 for six months of service.

The salaries are only the beginning. Party leaders in the Chamber of Deputies have a trove of discretionary funds to assist themselves and their colleagues. In 2004, the amount distributed to the three major parties was \$15,892,668 to PRI, which had 223 deputies; \$10,297,611 to PAN and its 153 deputies; and \$7,359,122 to the 97 deputies of the PRD.

Mexican deputies enjoy their junkets, frequently taking to the air or the road and asking the country's taxpayers to foot the bill. During 2005, the Chamber of Deputies spent \$1,018,518.50 on domestic and foreign travel. These outlays amounted to \$2,095.24 for each of the 500 deputies or \$2,927.78 for the 348 deputies who, on average, actually showed up for legislative sessions. This spending on travel is dubious for two reasons: deputies, who cannot run for immediate re-election, do not have to return to their districts every week-end like so many U.S. congressmen; and the Mexican Senate—not the Chamber of Deputies—plays the primary legislative role in international affairs.

But Mexico's lower chamber believes in rewarding itself for its spendthrift ways. At the end of its three-year term (2000-2003), the last Chamber of Deputies voted itself a \$28,000 "leaving-office bonus."

Even better work, if you can get it, is to be found in the judicial branch of the Mexican federal government. In 2005, the 11 justices on the National Supreme Court of Justice—equivalent to the U.S. Supreme Court—received \$311,759, compared to \$194,200 for their American counterparts. (The U.S. Chief Justice earns \$202,900.)

State-level Mexican officials are amply rewarded as well. Salaries and bonuses place the average compensation of Mexican governors at \$125,759, which exceeds by almost \$10,000 the mean paychecks of U.S. state executives (\$115,778). Narciso Agúndez Montaña runs Baja California Sur. Although his state has only 424,041 residents, he earns \$277,777. This is \$100,000 more than the salary of Arnold Schwarzenegger, who governs 36,132,147 Californians.

On top of that, the wives of Mexican governors frequently serve as heads of

the quasi-charitable Integral Family Development program in their states, enabling them to earn the equivalent of six-figure incomes in dollars. Some First Ladies take their responsibilities seriously; others treat the post as a sinecure.

As for state-level lawmakers, members of the 32 state legislatures earn on average \$60,632, more than twice the amount taken home by U.S. state legislators (\$28,261). The salaries and bonuses of the part-time lawmakers in Baja California (\$158,149), Guerrero (\$129,630), and Guanajuato (\$111,358) eclipse the salaries of the highest paid U.S. legislators, who meet virtually year-around: those in California (\$110,880), the District of Columbia (\$92,500), Michigan (\$79,650), and New York (\$79,500).

Few would begrudge the pay and benefits of Mexican lawmakers at the federal level, at least, if they had more to show for the several months they spend in the capital each year. But regrettably, they prize vapid speechmaking over the passage of major bills. Since Fox took office on Dec. 1, 2000, the legislature has failed to enact fiscal, labor, energy, and judicial reforms vital for achieving sustained development in a country where per capita income grew only 2 percent last year and joblessness abounds.

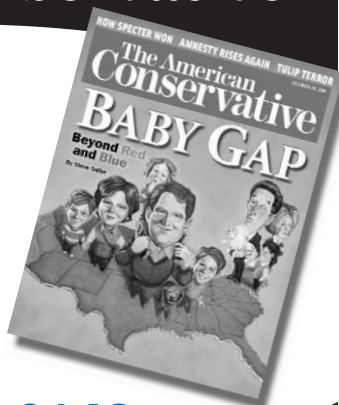
Instead, the political class comes up with cynical measures like the one that supposedly would allow 4 million Mexicans living abroad to cast ballots in the July 2 presidential contest. Although the Chamber of Deputies passed a reasonably liberal bill—it included the installation of voting places in foreign countries—the version that emerged from the Senate was largely cosmetic. The PRI eviscerated the measure because the party, which ruled from 1929 to 2000, feared that expatriates would support the PAN or the PRD. By passing something, deputies and senators could claim that they had backed the vote for Mexicans abroad who send back \$18 billion per

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year in remittances. At the same time, they encrusted the initiative with cumbersome procedures to ensure minimal participation. On Jan. 15, the cut-off date for requesting ballots, only 56,749 men and women had submitted paperwork, and several thousand of these applications did not satisfy bureaucratic requirements. Yet Congress approved almost \$100 million (1.062 billion pesos) for this venture, which is the equivalent of \$1,762 per application.

Even as they bank the big pesos, Mexican politicians are allergic to taxes. Excluding oil earnings, Mexico collects taxes equivalent to 9 percent of GDP—a figure on par with Haiti, a socioeconomic basket case. In fact, the Port-au-Prince regime earmarks a larger portion of its gross domestic product to health care—7.6 percent—than does Mexico (6.10 percent), according to the most recent World Bank figures. While there are no comparable figures for education, Mexico devoted a substantially smaller portion of its national income (5.30 percent) to education than did neighboring—and poorer—Guatemala (9.01 percent).

Meanwhile, it takes 58 days to open a business in Mexico in large measure because of the number of palms that must be greased. For this reason, Transparency International has ranked Mexico—along with Ghana, Panama, Peru, and Turkey—among the 65th to 70th most corrupt nations in the world. This same study placed Mexico 73rd out of 155 countries in terms of the “ease of doing business.” It ranked 84th for “starting a business,” came in at 49 for “dealing with licenses,” 125 with respect to “hiring and firing,” 74 for “registering property,” and 68 in terms of “getting credit.”

The self-serving behavior and corruption of Mexican politicians would make a Tammany Hall precinct captain blush. While the nation’s leaders take home pay and perquisites that compare very

favorably to the salaries of their North American and European counterparts, Mexico’s economy stagnates as unemployment and under-employment (the latter estimated at 25 percent of the workforce) hold steady. Yet politicians south of the border insist that the U.S. has an obligation to solve their problems by allowing the mutual border to be used as a safety valve for those who cannot make a living at home in Mexico.

Geography, self-interests, and humanitarian concerns require that neighboring countries co-operate on myriad issues, not the least of which is immigration. But

Mexico’s elite has failed through omission and commission to take the difficult decisions necessary to use its country’s enormous wealth to benefit the 50 percent of people who live in poverty. U.S. leaders and taxpayers have every right to insist that these officials act responsibly instead of demanding that Americans shoulder burdens that they shirk. ■

George W. Grayson, who teaches Government at the College of William & Mary, has just published Mesías Mexicano, a book about presidential front-runner Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Special Relationship

The U.S. and Israel manipulate each other to mutual disadvantage.

By Uri Avnery

TEL AVIV—I don’t usually tell these stories because they might give rise to the suspicion that I am paranoid.

For example, 27 years ago, I was invited to give a lecture tour in 30 American universities, including all the most prestigious ones—Harvard, Yale, Princeton, MIT, Berkeley, and so on. My host was the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a respected non-Jewish organization, but the lectures themselves were to be held under the auspices of the Jewish Bet-Hillel chaplains. On arrival at the airport in New York, I was met by one of the organizers. “There is a slight hitch,” he told me, “29 of the rabbis have cancelled your lecture.”

In the end, all the lectures did take place, under the auspices of Christian chaplains. When we came to the lone rabbi who had not cancelled my lecture,

he told me the secret: the lectures had been forbidden in a confidential letter from the Anti-Defamation League, the thought-police of the Jewish establishment. The salient phrase has stuck in my memory: “While it cannot be said that Member of the Knesset Avnery is a traitor, yet ...”

And another story from real life: a year later I went to Washington, D.C. in order to “sell” the two-state solution, which at the time was considered an outlandish, not to say crazy, idea. In the course of the visit, the Quakers were so kind as to arrange a press conference for me.

When I arrived, I was amazed. The hall was crammed full, practically all the important American media were represented. Many had come straight from a press conference held by Golda

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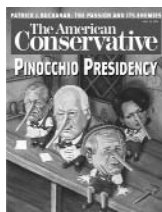
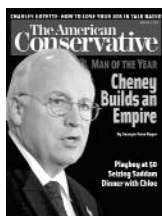
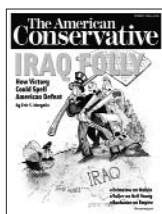
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Meir, who was also in town. The event was to last an hour, as is usual, but the journalists did not let go. They bombarded me with questions for another two hours. Clearly, what I had to say was quite new to them and they were interested.

I was curious how this would be reported in the media. And indeed, the reaction was stunning: not a word appeared in any of the newspapers, on radio, or TV. Not one single word.

Three years ago, I again held a press conference, this time on Capitol Hill. It was an exact replica of the last time: the crowd of reporters, their obvious interest, the continuation of the conference well beyond the appointed time—and not a single word in the media.

I could tell some more stories like these, but the point is made. I recount them only in connection with the scandal recently caused by two American professors, Stephen Walt of Harvard and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago. They published a research paper on the influence of the Israel lobby in the United States.

In 80 pages, 40 of them footnotes and sources, the two show how the pro-Israel lobby exercises unbridled power in the U.S. capital, how it terrorizes the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, how the White House dances to its tune (if indeed a house can dance), how the important media obey its orders, and how the universities, too, live in fear of it.

The paper caused a storm. And I don't mean the predictable wild attacks by the "friends of Israel"—which means almost all politicians, journalists, and professors. They pelted the authors with all the usual accusations: that they were anti-Semites, that they were resurrecting *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and so forth. There was something paradoxical in these attacks, since they only illustrated the authors' case.

But the debate that fascinates me is of a different nature. It broke out between senior intellectuals, from the legendary Noam Chomsky, the guru of the Left throughout the world (including Israel), to progressive websites everywhere. The bone of contention: the conclusion of the paper that the Jewish-Israeli lobby dominates U.S. foreign policy and subjugates it to Israeli interests—in glaring contradiction to the national interest of the U.S. itself. A case in point: the American assault on Iraq.

Chomsky and others rose up against this assertion. They do not deny the factual findings of the two professors but object to their conclusions. In their view, it is not the Israel lobby that directs American policy but the interests of the big corporations that dominate the American empire and exploit Israel for their own selfish aims.

Simply put: does the dog wag its tail, or does the tail wag its dog?

I am nervous about sticking my head into a debate between such illustrious intellectuals, but I feel obliged to express my view nevertheless.

I'll start with the Jew who went to the rabbi and complained about his neighbor. "You are right," the rabbi declared. Then came the neighbor who denounced the complainant. "You are right," the rabbi announced. "But how can that be?" exclaimed the rabbi's wife, "Only one of the two can be right!" "You are right, too," the rabbi said.

I find myself in a similar situation. I think that both sides are right (and hope to be right, myself, too).

The findings of the two professors are right to the last detail. Every senator and congressman knows that criticizing the Israeli government is political suicide. Two of them, a senator and a congressman, tried—and were politically executed. The Jewish lobby was fully mobilized against them and hounded them out of office. This was done openly, to

set a public example. If the Israeli government wanted a law tomorrow annulling the Ten Commandments, 95 senators (at least) would sign the bill forthwith.

President Bush, for example, has withdrawn from all the established American positions regarding our conflict. He accepts automatically the positions of our government, be they as they may. Almost all the American media are closed to Palestinians and Israeli peace activists. As to professors, almost all of them know which side of their bread is peanut-buttered. If, in spite of that, somebody dares to open his mouth against the Israeli policy—as happens once every few years—he is smothered under a volley of denunciations: anti-Semite, Holocaust denier, neo-Nazi.

AMERICAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS ARE INDEED UNIQUE. IT SEEMS THAT THEY HAVE NO PRECEDENT IN HISTORY. IT IS AS IF KING HEROD HAD GIVEN ORDERS TO AUGUSTUS CAESAR AND APPOINTED THE MEMBERS OF THE ROMAN SENATE.

American guests in Israel, who know that at home it is forbidden to mention the influence of the Jewish-Israeli lobby, are dumbfounded to see that here the lobby does not hide its power in Washington but openly boasts of it.

The question, therefore, is not whether the two professors are right in their findings. The question is what conclusions can be drawn from them.

Let's take the Iraq affair. Who is the dog? Who is the tail?

The Israeli government prayed for this attack, which has eliminated the strategic threat posed by Iraq. America was pushed into the war by a group of neoconservatives, almost all of them Jews, who had a huge influence on the White House. In the past, some of them had acted as advisers to Binyamin Netanyahu.

On the face of it, a clear case. The pro-Israeli lobby pushed for the war, Israel is its main beneficiary. If the war ends in a disaster for America, Israel will undoubtedly be blamed.

Really? What about the Americans' aim of getting their hands on the main oil reserves of the world in order to dominate the world economy? What about the aim of placing an American garrison in the center of the main oil-producing area, on top of the Iraqi oil, between the oil of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Caspian Sea? What about the immense influence of the big oil companies on the Bush family? What about the big multinational corporations, whose outstanding representative is Dick Cheney, that hoped to make hundreds of billions from the "reconstruction of Iraq"?

The lesson of the Iraq affair is that the American-Israeli connection is strongest when it seems that American interests and Israeli interests are one, irrespective of whether that is really the case in the long run. The U.S. uses Israel to dominate the Middle East, Israel uses the U.S. to dominate Palestine.

But if something exceptional happens, such as the Jonathan Pollard espionage affair or the sale of an Israeli spy plane to China, and a gap opens between the interests of the two sides, America is quite capable of slapping Israel in the face.

American-Israeli relations are indeed unique. It seems that they have no precedent in history. It is as if King Herod had given orders to Augustus Caesar and appointed the members of the Roman Senate.

I don't think that this phenomenon can be wholly explained by economic interests. Even the most orthodox Marxist must recognize that it also has a spiritual dimension. The evangelical lobby is no less important in today's Washington than the Zionist one. According to its ideology, the Jews must take possession of all the Holy Land in order to make the Second Coming of Christ possible (and then—the part they don't shout about—some Jews will become Christians and the rest will be annihilated at Armageddon, today's Meggido in Northern Israel).

At the base of the phenomenon lies the uncanny similarity between the two national religious stories, the American myth and the Israeli. In both, pioneers persecuted for their religion reached the shores of the Promised Land. They were forced to defend themselves against the "savage" natives, who were out to destroy them. They redeemed the land, made the desert bloom, created, with God's help, a flourishing, democratic and moral society.

Both societies live in a state of denial and unconscious guilty feelings—over there because of the genocide committed against the Native Americans and the slavery of the blacks, here because of the uprooting of half the Palestinian people and the oppression of the other half. Both here and there, people believe in an eternal war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.

Anyhow, the American-Israeli symbiosis is unique and far too complex a phenomenon to be described as a simple conspiracy. I am sure that the two professors did not mean to do so.

The dog wags the tail, and the tail wags the dog. They wag each other. ■

Uri Avnery, a former fighter with the Irgun, is a veteran Israeli peace activist who heads the organization Gush Shalom.

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*American Dreamz*]

Mr. Quaid Goes to Washington

By Steve Sailer

"... AND THE SCREENPLAY practically writes itself!"

It's hard to avoid suspecting that's how filmmaker Paul Weitz ended his pitch to Universal of the clever concept and casting for his *roman à clef* comedy "American Dreamz."

Having made "About a Boy" with Hugh Grant in 2002 and "In Good Company" with Dennis Quaid in 2005, both solid films, it must have seemed only natural to Weitz—son of fashion designer turned historian John Weitz—to cast the two veterans together.

After dithering away the early years of his career as a fluttery romantic lead, Grant has emerged since 2001's "Bridget Jones' Diary" as Hollywood's finest cad, a worthy successor to the sardonic George Sanders. So why not have Grant play a self-loathing game-show host based on Simon Cowell, the scathing English judge on the top-rated television show of the decade, "American Idol"?

Back in the 1980s, Quaid's status was a lot like Ronald Reagan's in the early 1940s—a likeable and reliable second-tier leading man. Then Quaid wrecked his career with cocaine. He has made a comeback playing middle-aged Texans

—winningly in "The Rookie" as a washed-up minor leaguer and distressingly in "The Alamo" as a Sam Houston, who seems to be suffering from a gastrointestinal malady. So let's cast him as a clueless doofus based on George W. Bush!

But how exactly do Simon and George wind up in the same movie?

Well, uh ... the president could come down with clinical depression when he finally realizes how unqualified he is for the job. His chief of staff, a Dick Cheney / Karl Rove Svengali played by Willem Dafoe, then books him on *American Dreamz* as a guest judge to boost his polls. A show-tunes-loving Iraqi immigrant contestant, whose mother was killed by American bombs, is assigned by Osama bin Laden to blow up the president. But are 72 virgins enough to persuade Omer to forego singing "The Impossible Dream" to 72 million viewers? And as the suicide-bomber's main rival, Mandy Moore plays a rural ingénue who turns out as media-savvy and manipulative as Paris Hilton.

Unfortunately, screenplays don't actually write themselves, and Weitz never quite figured out whether he wanted all this complicated plotting to wind up brutally satirical or sweetly silly. "American Dreamz" isn't a bad movie, but his script is too on-the-nose to be terribly funny.

One problem with "American Dreamz" as a satire is that "American Idol" is one of those rare pop culture phenomena, like the "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" quiz show a half-dozen years ago, that just isn't all that deplorable. "Idol" is a singing contest for the whole family to watch. And its most controversial feature—Simon's blunt

advice to many entrants to discard their dreams and get a real job, something that powerful men in the music industry are not always known for saying when confronted with pretty but talentless girls desperate for a break—is also its most admirable. If you wonder how movie people can be so self-righteous despite their often dubious personal behavior, one answer lies in their ability to say, "At least we're not music executives."

Quaid's portrayal of Bush is merely a more sympathetic version of Chris Cooper's take on the president as an utter nimrod in John Sayles's 2004 flop "Silver City." (So far, the only fictional version of Bush to show much insight has been Hoyt Thorpe, the malevolent but brave and charismatic frat boy in Tom Wolfe's *I Am Charlotte Simmons*.)

Sneering at Bush's IQ hasn't helped Democrats yet. The only election Bush ever lost was his 1978 run for Congress from Midland, when his Democratic opponent taunted him for earning two Ivy League degrees. That was the last time any rival outdumbd him.

As I demonstrated in 2004, Bush slightly outscored John Kerry on their military officer qualification IQ exams—when NBC's Tom Brokaw mentioned my analysis to Kerry, he replied, "I must have been drinking the night before I took that military aptitude test." And last summer, it emerged that Kerry's grade point average at Yale was below Bush's.

No, Bush isn't dumb. Instead, he is hypercompetitive and aware of how little competence matters in winning presidential elections these days. Now, though, he's done running for president and finally has to start running the government. ■

Rated PG-13 for brief strong language and some sexual ref-

BOOKS

[The Brothers Bulger: How They Terrorized and Corrupted Boston for a Quarter Century, Howie Carr, Warner Books, 342 pages]

How Whitey Bulger Bought Boston

by William Norman Grigg

PEGGY WESTCOAT was a woman of small skills and modest ambitions. Just before Christmas in 1980, two men broke into the single-family home Peggy shared with a live-in boyfriend in southwest Dade County. The intruders threw a rope around the boyfriend's neck and hanged him near the front door. They then grabbed Peggy, shoved her against the kitchen sink, draped a noose around her neck, and began feeding the other end of the rope into a garbage disposal.

With the rope tight enough to terrify the victim without rendering her unconscious, the assailants turned off the grinder and began asking the terrified woman about her work as a cashier at the Miami "fronton" (or arena) of World Jai Alai, an exotic Iberian sport that had been controlled by Bostonians since the 1920s. A few months earlier, World Jai Alai had been sold to a new owner, and Boston's Winter Hill mob—led by James "Whitey" Bulger—wanted to know if the new owners had discovered the mob's skimming operation. Satisfied by Peggy's panicked answers, the invaders flipped the switch on the disposal.

"When the cops found the two bodies the next day," notes *Boston Herald* columnist Howie Carr in *The Brothers Bulger*, "they chalked it up as another Miami drug deal gone bad." In fact, it was just one of scores of murders committed by a Boston crime combine that wedded the Irish mob to the FBI. That

marriage eventually broke up in 1996, when Bulger—tipped off by his FBI handler, John Connolly—fled the United States one step ahead of several murder indictments. He is presently number two on the FBI's Most Wanted list, below another one-time asset of the federal government named Osama bin Laden.

Connolly, convicted of various racketeering charges, is in prison until at least 2010. He also faces first-degree murder charges in Florida for allegedly providing information that led to the murder of Peggy Westcoat's one-time boss, World Jai Alai president John Callahan.

At the time of Peggy Westcoat's murder, the head of security for World Jai Alai was retired FBI Special Agent H. Paul Rico. Rico had taken note of Whitey Bulger in the early 1950s, when the future head of the Irish mob was a small-caliber hoodlum working as a homosexual prostitute. Rico, writes Carr, "could justify his sojourns to the Bay Village gay clubs as reaching out to new 'sources.'"

From the very beginning of his career as a South Boston thug, Bulger was an informant. Gangsters planning to hijack a truck "might mention something about a future score to Whitey, just in passing, and sure enough, when they showed up

find "a cure for schizophrenia." Dr. Jules Pfeiffer, who supervised the experiments, was working off a grant provided by the CIA, which probably wasn't interested in humanitarian applications of the drug.

Whitey returned to Southie in 1965, just in time to benefit from three critical developments. First, the FBI—in keeping with Robert Kennedy's priorities—had decided to tear into La Cosa Nostra (better known as the Mafia). Special Agent Rico thus began to cultivate informants and allies within the Winter Hill mob, the Mafia's deadly rival.

Second, just days before Whitey's return, one of Rico's informants, Jimmy "The Bear" Flemmi, murdered an undistinguished thug named Edward Deegan. In order to protect their informant, the Boston FBI office conducted a cover-up, sending four admittedly unsavory men to prison for Deegan's murder, which they didn't commit. By collaborating in that murder and cover-up, the Boston FBI office effectively "made its bones" as a full-fledged ally of the Irish mob.

But for Whitey Bulger the most propitious development was the emergence of his younger brother Billy as a rising political star in Bay State politics, which Carr describes as seamlessly integrated with the underworld.

BY COLLABORATING IN THAT MURDER AND COVER-UP, THE BOSTON FBI OFFICE EFFECTIVELY "MADE ITS BONES" AS A FULL-FLEDGED ALLY OF THE IRISH MOB.

to grab the truck, the FBI or the local cops would be there waiting," Carr recounts. "H. Paul Rico's personnel file soon included commendations from the director, J. Edgar Hoover. At the same time, no one suspected Whitey—it was inconceivable that one of Southie's own would become a rat."

Sent to prison in Atlanta for bank robbery in 1956, Whitey volunteered to serve as a test subject in LSD experiments in exchange for time off his 20-year sentence. "We were recruited by deception," Bulger later complained, recalling that he was supposedly helping

In 1961, when the Kennedy family entered the White House and Billy Bulger made his debut as a state legislator, the informal rules of conduct on Beacon Hill "boiled down to three points: Nothing on the level; everything is a deal; no deal [is] too small," writes Carr. Massachusetts novelist Edwin O'Connor describes state politics as "a special kind of tainted, small-time fellowship" through which "even the sleaziest poolroom bookie managed, in some way, however obscure, to be in touch with the mayor's office or the governor's chair."

Billy Bulger would eventually become president of the state Senate, a post that allowed him to dispense patronage as he saw fit. Boston-born FBI agents like Paul Rico, who confronted mandatory retirement at 50, were eager to cultivate Billy Bulger's favor. By racking up arrests of Italian mobsters, the G-men could earn promotions and plaudits. By taking care of the Bulger family, they could supplement their federal paychecks and maybe arrange cushy post-retirement sinecures at Boston Edison or some other hack habitat.

Before leaving Boston for Miami in 1970, Rico recruited Steve Flemmi, a close associate of Whitey Bulger who was also tied in with the Italian mob, as a "top echelon informant." Five years

later, Whitey—who had by then established himself as a secure but unremarkable racketeer—was also granted "top echelon" status. Flemmi would scrape up intelligence on the Italians, and Whitey would pass it along to the feds. As Flemmi later described it, this relationship produced a perverse alchemy: "Me and Whitey gave [the Feds] sh-t, and they gave us gold."

BULGER "HAD SIX [AGENTS] HE COULD CALL ON ANYTIME AND THEY WOULD WILLINGLY HOP IN THE CAR WITH HIM WITH THE MACHINE GUN."

Why was Whitey included in this package deal, when Flemmi was the one with the mob contacts? As Carr points out, the Boston FBI office "didn't need Whitey nearly as much as they needed his brother Billy"—and the favors that Billy could dispense on those who took care of his interests, including Whitey.

By 1980, Whitey, Stevie, and the FBI "were partners," notes Carr. "And from the beginning, it was a one-sided deal. Each side would do 'favors' for the other, but the FBI's were a lot more valuable than the cash and gifts that Whitey and Stevie would pass on to their agents." Whitey and his handler, Special Agent Connolly, had grown up a few blocks apart from each other. They both wanted to take down Boston's Italian

mob—Connolly because doing so was the key to promotion within the bureau and Bulger because he wanted to clear the field of any rivals. Connolly, who has tried unsuccessfully to sell a screenplay lionizing himself as the man who took down the Boston branch of the Mafia, has described his entente with Bulger as a brilliant "business" strategy—protecting one mob chieftain to take down scores of others. But that business arrangement was nothing less than a license for Bulger and his cronies to murder, extort, and rape with impunity. They also seized control over the local narcotics trade even as Bulger was heralded in the *Boston Globe* as a kind-hearted Robin Hood who was "keeping drugs out of Southie."

In his own memoir, *Brutal*, one-time Bulger henchman Kevin Weeks observed of Whitey that while "nothing seemed to relax him or feel quite so good as a murder," he was "calculating" and disciplined in killing. Flemmi, on the other hand, "would kill someone, anywhere, anytime." Bulger and Flemmi were also incorrigible pederasts, the latter indulging a taste for underage girls, the former preying on children of both sexes.

Weeks also claims that Connolly and his corrupt fellow agents did more than merely look the other way. He asserts that Bulger "had six [agents] he could call on anytime and they would willingly hop in the car with him with the machine gun." Being on the take was quite profitable for Connolly. A former secretary testifies that she once saw no fewer than ten uncashed federal paychecks in Connolly's desk—a potent illustration of the contempt he felt for the substantial if unspectacular wages paid to an honest G-man.

While Connolly and his ilk were living large, honest Southies were living in terror. Carr and Weeks both describe the

plight of Steve "Stippo" Rakes, a Southie who in 1983 scraped together enough money to buy a small piece of commercial property that he turned into a liquor store—the only one on Old Colony Avenue with convenient parking. As Rakes's store began to prosper, anonymous death threats came spilling from his telephone. He soon fell prey to a Bulger protection racket and was forced to sell his business on concessionary terms. Renamed the South Boston Liquor Mart, the pilfered business soon became a favored hang-out of Bulger's political allies.

During the 1987 Christmas season, relates Carr, "agents of the Boston FBI office bought the booze for the annual holiday party at the South Boston Liquor Mart. For the FBI the price was always right." At John Connolly's retirement party three years later, after the corrupt agent had heaped praise on Billy Bulger for getting him his job at the bureau and arranging his post-retirement gig at Boston Edison, he was handed a bottle of wine he was told came "courtesy of South Boston Liquors." "No finer liquor store in the commonwealth," replied Connolly with a knowing smirk.

What of Steve Rakes, who had that liquor store stolen from him by the FBI's "top echelon informant"? Summoned to testify before two grand juries, Rakes—who had a wife and two daughters to protect—refused to talk. He was eventually convicted of perjury and sentenced to probation. Facing destitution, Rakes sought out a hack job with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. A friendly politician arranged one for him—in exchange for a \$3,000 bribe.

"Absent justice," wrote Augustine in *The City of God*, "what are kingdoms but vast robberies?" The unfathomably corrupt union of the criminal underworld and political "overworld" described by Carr offers a compelling illustration of what Augustine had in mind. ■

William Norman Grigg is the author of four books and Senior Editor of The New American magazine.

[*Manliness*, Harvey C. Mansfield, Yale University Press, 289 pages]

It's A Man's Man's World

By Clark Stooksbury

WE LIVE IN AN AGE of gender confusion. The days when, as Archie Bunker sang, “girls were girls and men were men” have long passed. Women today serve at or near the front lines in the Iraq War and are well represented at elite colleges and graduate schools. They have made advances in politics—a woman leads the Democrats in the House of Representatives and many leading pundits predict that the next president will be a woman. (My prediction: they’re wrong). One might think that feminists would be happy with this state of affairs, but alas they are not.

A widely discussed article by Linda Hirshman in *The American Prospect* last year addressed the problem—for her—of women who graduated from elite schools only to leave the workplace and become stay-at-home mothers after a few years. Hirshman’s message to these women boils down to “cut that out!” She laments that feminism didn’t “change men, and, more importantly, it didn’t fundamentally change how women related to men.” Hirshman suggests, or demands, that young women marry either younger, lower-status men or much older and financially secure men and have no more than one child. In other words, Hirshman lives in a dream world.

The dissatisfaction of feminists doesn’t necessarily herald happy times for men, however. The nature of modern life, with its lengthy commutes to office parks and days parked in front of computer screens, is vaguely emasculating. A feminist author, Susan Faludi, even wrote a book a few years ago arguing that American men were getting “stiffed” by everything from corporate downsizing to faithless NFL franchises.

Into this fray steps Harvard professor Harvey C. Mansfield and his abruptly titled *Manliness*. Mansfield defines manliness as confidence in the face of danger. Manliness, he says, “seeks and welcomes drama and prefers times of war, conflict, and risk.” He also discusses the quality of *thumos* (spiritedness) as a basic element of manliness. “In the *Republic* [Plato] presents *thumos*, the bristling snappishness of a dog, as the outstanding feature of the guardians or rulers of the just city that he constructs.”

Mansfield doesn’t aim to set the clock back to 1956 and put women in pearls and high heels behind vacuum cleaners. Instead he aims to revivify the quality of manliness and keep it from being consumed by what he calls the “gender-neutral society.” He doesn’t consider manliness to be an entirely positive trait—the ranks of the manly often express disdain “not only for women’s work but even for *women*” (emphasis in original). He even

THEODORE ROOSEVELT BELIEVED THAT WAR INSTILLED MANLINESS.

lists a rogues’ gallery of unappealing manly men: “Russell Crowe in *Gladiator*, the singer Ted Nugent in *Cat Scratch Fever*, and the wrestler Jesse Ventura in *Governor of Minnesota*.”

Teddy Roosevelt is one of America’s more ostentatiously manly presidents and a natural subject for Mansfield’s study. However, unlike the more commonly recognized strong silent type, TR was positively chatty:

TR’s famous maxim for foreign policy was ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick.’ But when it came to the manly virtues, he actually spoke quite loudly. I am not sure there is one recorded instance in his life of his speaking softly, even to his wife; when he spoke, it was always for publication. Why wasn’t it enough to carry and swing his stick? It seems that manliness is not something you can just have or be or do; you have to talk or boast about it.

Roosevelt did more than just talk about manly pursuits. He was an avid outdoorsman and hunter, which fueled his conservationism. In a speech at Yellowstone Park in 1903, the president remarked that the park would ensure “much of the old-time pleasure of the hardy life of the wilderness and of the hunter in the wilderness ...” Alas, not any more. Mansfield notes that a visit to Yellowstone Park today “is now no more, perhaps less, an adventure than visiting Disneyland with its artificial thrills.”

TR also believed that war instilled manliness. After acting in his capacity as assistant secretary of the Navy to pour fuel on the smoldering crisis in Cuba in 1898, he resigned his post and formed the Rough Riders—a cavalry unit that Mansfield describes as “consisting of cowboys leavened by polo players.” The numerous advocates of the invasion of Iraq who avoided military service in their youth have acquired labels such as “chicken hawk.” It is likely that if he

were alive, TR would be among the critics since he resigned his desk job in his 40th year and went to war.

Mansfield doesn’t mention Roosevelt’s role in the First World War, but that conflict also showed Teddy’s manly side. Roosevelt was, of course, aggressively hawkish and supported Britain and France when the U.S. was still officially neutral. After Congress declared war on Germany in 1917, the former president offered to raise a volunteer division but was rebuffed by Woodrow Wilson. His four sons served in the war, and one of them, Quentin, died in action. The former president advised his niece Eleanor that her husband, a pre-polio Franklin Roosevelt, should resign his position as assistant secretary of the Navy and fight—like a man.

Roosevelt thought it was “sheer unmanliness” to “shrink” from political struggles. The level of Rooseveltian machismo in American politics has greatly increased in the last few years. In

the 2000 campaign, Governor Bush projected an easy and comfortable masculinity compared to Vice President Gore, who was derided by Ann Coulter as "little Miss-Know-It-All." It is difficult to say how much his swagger aided him in the 2000 election since Bush finished behind Gore in the popular vote. After 9/11, President Bush was reassuringly manly while standing in the rubble of the twin towers speaking to burly blue-collar workers through a bullhorn, telling the world that "the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon." Though the president's macho act began to wear thin after his now infamous carrier-landing PR stunt and his "bring them on" bravado in the summer of 2003, he still out-manned John Kerry in the testosterone-laden 2004 election.

Set against the example of Teddy Roosevelt and his support for the manly

virtues is the philosopher and psychologist William James, who ridiculed TR's talk about the "strenuous life." James was not an enthusiast for war like Roosevelt; he denounced the "vile conduct" involved in our Philippines occupation. But James favored the same sort of hard manliness as Teddy Roosevelt. In his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War," which, as Mansfield notes, is more famous for its title than its content, James states that "Militarism is the great preserver of our ideals of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible."

William James died in 1910, so he never knew that the world was on the brink of a great bloodletting and young men would have ample opportunity to preserve "our ideals of hardihood" for decades. It is doubtful that James's notion of preserving manhood via a kind of Civilian Conservation Corps—Mansfield compares James's proposal to the Peace Corps, but the New Deal program is more apt—would work. Mansfield states, "you do not have to love war to doubt that its demands can be artificially reproduced in time of peace."

No examination of gender-related issues would be complete without covering the nature/nurture debate. That men and women are very different is blindingly obvious to all but the nuttiest of feminists, but that is a starting point rather than an end to the discussion. Mansfield's former boss, the sacked Harvard president Larry Summers, found that it is dangerous in some circles to discuss casually the implications of this insight. Mansfield's treatment of the subject is less than satisfying. He writes:

Now it is time to address the question of nature and nurture in manliness. That question is usually treated as if it were a dispute over fact, though with obvious political overtones. Those who want to reform the status of men and women by creating the gender-neutral society need to believe that manliness is a product of nurture and that it can be removed from the

scene by frowning on it or by other methods of de-nurturing and re-nurturing. But there is an issue at stake larger than the reform in sex roles. This question has to do with human importance, with how much human beings matter in the grand scheme of things. The manly man thinks and asserts that he matters . . . Manliness, as we have seen, is the assertion of meaning when meaning is at risk. If human events were determined by nature, understood as overpowering accidents, then it would not matter what human beings think or do...

To attribute a quality such as manliness to nature is not the same as abolishing free will or meaning. Yet another Harvard man, Edward O. Wilson, stated concisely in *On Human Nature*, "in most species, assertiveness is the most profitable male strategy." But it is a huge leap from the caveman with the biggest club being selected over his weaker cavemates to Teddy Roosevelt carrying a big stick. Nature might explain the quality of manliness, but individual men are nurtured by families, traditions, and communities.

Mansfield makes it clear that the manliness he describes almost always occurs in, well, men. The "manly" woman he mentions is Margaret Thatcher. The Iron Lady, as she was known, faced down Argentina in 1982 and sent a task force to reclaim the Falkland Islands when negotiations failed and later bucked up George H.W. Bush in 1990, instructing him to not go "wobbly" on Saddam. It is difficult to imagine anyone referring to her as anybody's "poodle."

Harvey Mansfield favors official gender-neutrality in the public realm of society, where women have opportunity but men still dominate. But he argues that "women should . . . also be expected to be women. And men should be expected, not merely free, to be manly." ■

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tenn.

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[*The Wal-Mart Effect: How the World's Most Powerful Company Really Works—and How It's Transforming the American Economy*, Charles Fishman, Penguin, 294 pages]

The High Cost of Low Prices

By Marian Kester Coombs

SAM WALTON HAD A DREAM: find out what people want and sell it to them for less. His dream was a variant of Adam Smith's assertion in *The Wealth of Nations*: "The sole purpose of all production is to provide the best possible goods to the consumer at the lowest possible price." The variation stems from the qualifier "best possible": Walton's obsessive quest never extended to quality. And in the 230 years since Smith penned those famous words, society has learned to question his narrow vision of "the sole purpose of all production."

As books like this demonstrate, Wal-Mart is the elephant in the room that no one is ignoring. Like the blind men who tried to assay the elephant in the fable, many have touched on different aspects of the mega-retailer. Business journalist Charles Fishman's purpose is to synthesize all the critiques into one overarching analysis of "the Wal-Mart effect," that is, how the company "gets those low prices, and what impact the low prices have far beyond Wal-Mart's shelves and beyond our own wallets: the cost of low prices to the companies that supply Wal-Mart, and to the people who work for those companies."

The author frontloads his account with positives about this largest corporation in the history of the world, although here and there he drops the odd discordant note, each of which gets a full hearing beginning with Chapter Four, "The Squeeze." The biggest positives are the two for which Wal-Mart is beloved of blinkered free traders: its

deflationary effect upon prices and its relentless promotion of efficiency up and down the chain of production, distribution, and sale.

Wal-Mart's impact on the economy is difficult to assess since it is a notoriously close-mouthed entity, but Fishman has done a fine job of mining what data have been amassed. Fishman uses the insights they afford to move his case studies above and beyond "anecdotal" to the level of important conceptualizations of the globalizing economy. The child crusaders protesting at New World Order summits ought to read this book if they want finally to be able to articulate what's wrong with globalization.

Wal-Mart began in Bentonville, Arkansas in 1962 as a single store and has grown to be the world's largest corporation and employer. Target and Kmart opened their first stores the same year; the difference between them and Wal-Mart was, and is, the latter's single-minded focus on offering the lowest possible prices all the time, not just during sales, no matter what it takes. Sam Walton banked on the addictive power of "too good to be true" bargain pricing to grow his business by cannibalizing existing retailers. It has worked—and in the process helped transform America from the workshop of the world into a nation not even of shopkeepers but of shop assistants ("sales associates").

THE CRITIQUE OF MEGA-RETAILERS GOES **BACK TO THE 1920s**, WHEN THE **PETITE BOURGEOISIE FOUND ITSELF HARD PRESSED** BY DEPARTMENT STORES.

"In 2003," notes Fishman, "for the first time in modern U.S. history, the number of Americans working in retail (14.9 million) was greater than the number ... working in factories (14.5 million)." These are the jobs that Wal-Mart has created; at the same time, "10 percent of everything imported to the United States from China" is sold at Wal-Mart. The company should have a seat at the United Nations. At the very least it should register as an NGO.

A nation's businesses used to favor and protect the home market at the expense of "the colonials." This book demonstrates that the Wal-Mart effect is the most powerful market force expelling jobs and technology from our own country. Not only does Wal-Mart create low-wage jobs that lure further illegal immigrants here to do jobs that Americans could not afford to do even if they wanted to, but it provides a place those illegals can afford to shop. At the same time, it forces American taxpayers to subsidize its low wages by transferring the cost of health insurance to government programs.

Fishman excels at combining statistics with first-person narratives and tales of the rise and fall of companies. His book does justice to the fascinating material drama of the business world and to the substantiality and likeability of its inventors, engineers, managers, salesmen, and employees. Fishman has a warm feel for ordinary Americans—guys named Jim, Bill, and Larry who know their work inside out, talk a colorful lingo (to "have a big pencil," to "go vertical"), and still care, often passionately, about craftsmanship, a word absent from Wal-Mart's vocabulary.

Snobs sneer at the slobs who roam Wal-Mart's aisles (as gleefully and lovingly portrayed on the TV comedy "My Name Is Earl"), who guzzle Wal-Mart wines like "NASCARBernet" and "World Championship Riesling," whose pastors

moonlight as Elvis impersonators and whose Ph.D.'s stand for "post-hole diggers." For that matter, the critique of mega-retailers goes back at least to the 1920s, when the petite bourgeoisie found itself hard pressed by the success of department stores. But the real problem with Wal-Mart is that it knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

One of Fishman's ordinary guys, president Steve Dobbins of Carolina Mills, makes the book's most eloquent critique:

People say, how can it be bad for things to come into the United States cheaply? How can it be bad to have a bargain at Wal-Mart? Sure, it's held inflation down . . . But you can't buy anything if you're not employed. We are shopping ourselves out of jobs.

We want clean air, clean water, good living conditions, the best health care in the world. Yet we aren't willing to pay for anything manufactured under those restrictions.

One representative story might be called the Great Pickle Caper. Vlasic Corporation found itself bound to supply huge gallon jars of pickles to Wal-Mart for \$2.97, a price at which it made maybe a penny a jar. An "abundance of abundance," the jars' sales went through the roof and became a "devastating success" for Vlasic. A former Vlasic executive comments that consumers would "eat a quarter of a jar and throw the thing away when they got moldy. A family can't eat them fast enough." Forced to continue offering the deal or lose its entire Wal-Mart account, the company saw its profits squeezed for two and a half years before Wal-Mart finally let it "up for air."

In January 2001, after Wal-Mart was done making its "statement," Vlasic filed for bankruptcy. Fishman discerns the same "devastating success" among other suppliers, from Huffy bikes to Lovable lingerie: bankruptcy and closed factories here, a diaspora of jobs and entire industries to the Third World. "For the wages of a single U.S. factory worker, competitors could hire seventy people in Indonesia," one former manufacturer tells Fishman. Not only wages are forced downward: pensions, union representation, job security, overtime, health benefits, the very concept of a "career" are all flattened by the cost-cutting juggernaut.

Chapter Seven, "Salmon, Shirts, and the Meaning of Low Prices," uses the explosive growth of the farmed salmon industry as a case study. Wal-Mart sells

more salmon than anyone, at \$4.84 per pound. That is "a price so low, it doesn't seem to make sense if you think about it for even a moment." And indeed, the unpaid costs include miles of seabed buried in a "toxic sludge" of fish excreta, feed, and untreated entrails on the environmental side; and long hours at low pay with few benefits on the labor side. The eerily low price, in other words, masks the high cost of what the price does not "internalize"—humane, sustainable conditions for both salmon and humans.

No factor of production is more cannibalized than that of labor, because it is human labor more than any other factor that creates value. From the Wal-Mart manager who works a 60-hour week starting at 6:00 in the morning to the teenage girl in Bangladesh who, according to an international lawsuit filed in September 2005, was forced to sew pocket flaps onto 120 pairs of pants per hour for 13 cents per hour ("If you made any mistakes or fell behind on your goal . . . they slapped you and lashed you hard on the face with the pants. . . I clean my teeth with my finger, using ash. I can't afford a toothbrush or toothpaste"), the primary material out of which costs are squeezed is human. It is important to note, by the way, that even Bangladeshi labor law forbids the sort of workplaces patronized by Wal-Mart's buyers.

Fishman at this point asks, "Do Americans need clothing to be so inexpensive that the people making it cannot afford a toothbrush?" The answer is no, of course we don't, but Wal-Mart's cost-cutting dynamic not only demands it but forces all who resist it out of business. The ultimate goal is not really "low prices for the consumer" but the obliteration of all competitors. Once this goal has been achieved through reverse predatory pricing (AKA dumping), once Wal-Mart has become one-stop shopping for every product and every service in every land, the pressure to keep prices low will abate, to say the least.

Wal-Mart's pricing monomania has rooted out wasteful practices like the packaging of bottles, jars, and canisters of product in cardboard boxes but has

itself created another gigantic category of waste: the bargain TV or DVD player or lawn mower that, purchased without the benefit of a knowledgeable service person and manufactured with cheaper and cheaper materials, soon breaks down, is not worth repairing, and winds up dumped in the trash—the Pickle Caper writ large. Fishman notes, "In the Wal-Mart economy, we as consumers often buy too much just because it's cheap."

Quality vs. quantity has never been counterposed more urgently. Price deflation is here accomplished by wage reduction—a process directly counter to the American Dream, which sings the ever rising standard of living, the mutability of classes, the betterment of successive generations. Rarely has capitalism been rendered more "visible" than in Sam Walton's "always low prices," an Absolute Idea thinking itself over and over in idiot repetition.

W.B. Yeats wrote in "Easter 1916" that "Hearts with one purpose alone/ Through summer and winter seem/ Enchanted to a stone/ To trouble the living stream." Sam Walton wanted to make the whole world Waltonville, just as Mr. Potter in "It's A Wonderful Life" wished to make it Pottersville. Their dream is the stuff of nightmares for George Bailey and the rest of us. Even if you include "best possible goods" in your vision along with "lowest possible price," you have still not defined "the sole purpose of all production." Production is human self-creation, self-invention, self-discovery, service—humbling, ennobling, restorative—sacred toil.

According to Jeff Foxworthy, you might be a redneck if you've ever been promoted to dishwasher, or if the last physical you had was on board a UFO. In the Wal-Mart economy, you might not be a redneck yet, but you could be soon. If taxes are the price we have to pay for civilization, higher prices may be the price we have to pay for a First World society. ■

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Md.

Guilty Until Proven PC



This Duke University lacrosse story stinks to high heaven—and the *New York Times* coverage of it even more so. Frontier justice is what comes to

mind. Here's Jill Abramson, the managing editor of the Old Bag, on the paper's future: "We believe in a journalism of verification rather than assertion."

Really? If Abramson believes in a journalism of verification, what is she doing running the columns of Selena Roberts, the *Times* sports columnist? I first noticed this woman's rantings a couple of years ago during the Athens Olympics. Her coverage was so biased and so anti-Greek that I wrote a column in a Greek magazine explaining how American woman journalists tend to see everything through a feminist prism, and to hell with what is really taking place.

Let's take it from the top. According to contemporary liberal mores, only worthy victims are entitled to civil liberties. Unworthy victims, on the other hand, deserve nothing more than rough justice. The most recent unworthy victims, deserving of vilification, are the white members of the Duke lacrosse team, three of whom are accused of raping, beating, and insulting a black stripper they had hired for the night. That no DNA evidence has been found so far to link any of the athletes to the alleged victim means that the hunt must intensify. That one of the men the stripper identified as her assailant had already left the party when the alleged rape occurred is also of no importance. That his account is confirmed by the taxi driver who picked him up as well as by an ATM receipt does nothing to mitigate guilt. That the alleged victim's friend who was also at the party has changed her story to gain favorable treatment in

a previous criminal case against her, and that she e-mailed a New York public-relations firm asking "how to spin this to my advantage" are irrelevant matters, scarcely worth considering.

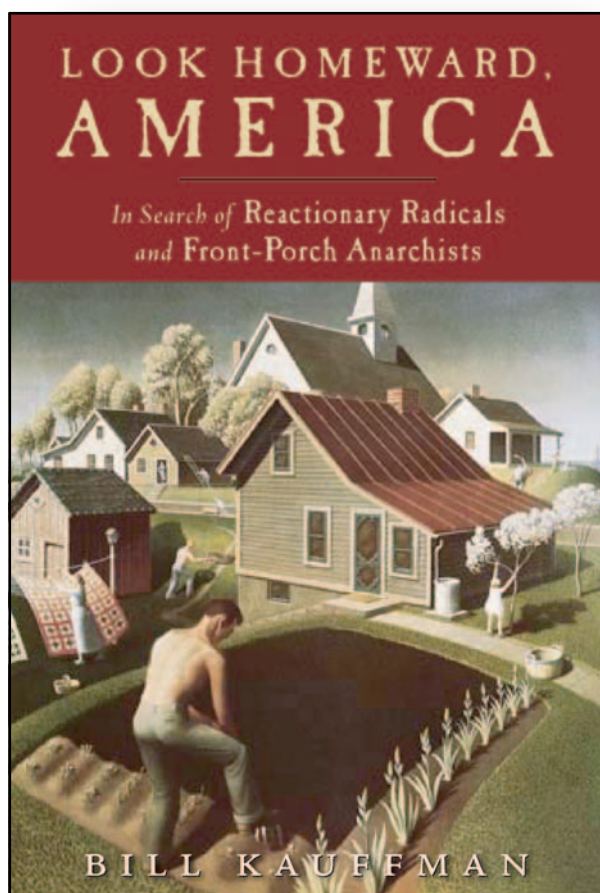
Selena Roberts must not have believed her luck when the story first broke. On March 31, she spluttered, "At the intersection of entitlement and enablement, there is Duke University, virtuous on the outside, debauched on the inside. ...The paradox lives on in Duke's lacrosse team, a group of privileged players of fine pedigree entangled in a night that threatens to belie their social standing as human beings." Wow! No one's been found guilty, there's been no trial, and as of today, no evidence has been unearthed except for the allegations of the accuser. And when Roberts penned these words no one had even been indicted. What ever happened to presumed innocence?

And it gets better. Only in last week's Sunday *Times*, the so-called public editor, the ombudsman, one Byron Calame, went to bat for his employer, whitewashing the paper for failing to report the accuser's criminal record: "Senior editors have decided it isn't 'germane' to the pending sexual assault case..." They would, wouldn't they? Why spoil a great story by publishing all the news that's fit to print? Then Mr. Calame throws us a bone: "The Times didn't tell readers about [the possible impact of the political pressures on the prosecutor] until the middle of the March 31 article, which noted only that the district attorney was 'in a heated race for re-election.'"

But back to Roberts. She wrote that the accuser "was raped, robbed, strangled and was the victim of a hate crime." What was it that her managing editor said about verification versus assertion? According to Roberts, it doesn't matter whether the rape allegations are true or not. The issue is the despicable male atmosphere at Duke: "Why is it so hard to gather the facts? Why is any whisper of a detail akin to snitching?" she cries. In other words, she assumes guilt and expects university officials and students to purge the guilty and start "a fresh discussion on race, gender and respect"—even if the lacrosse players didn't commit rape and didn't assault anyone, and didn't use foul threats. They as good as did, what with their being white male athletes and all.

But let's turn the thing around for the sake of race relations. What, I wonder, would the *Times* coverage have been like had a team of black basketball players been accused by two white trailer-park gals of the same crime? Would the *Times* have run 20 or more stories, as their ombudsman bragged it had, and on its front page to boot? Something tells me no way, Jose. Mind you, the *Times* was not alone in putting the boot in. There were so many liberal pundits who cried wolf, I have no space in this column to list them. If this turns out to be another Tawana Brawley case, pity the poor prosecutor. He gets to squander unlimited public funds destroying the careers of young men, forcing them and their relatives to spend vast sums on legal fees, driving their families into debt, and, because he's a government official, he is happily immune from civil suits for malicious prosecution and defamation. Here's my advice to young men out there: Forget lacrosse. Become prosecutors. ■

Are You a Reactionary Radical?



Bill Kauffman is the author of five books, most recently the localist manifesto *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, which won the 2003 national "Sense of Place" award from *Writers & Books*. His other books include a novel, a travel book, and works about American isolationists and critics of progress. He writes for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *American Enterprise*, *Counterpunch*, and the *American Conservative*.

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